VOCABULARY LEARNING STRATEGIES OF HIGH AND LOW PROFICIENCY VIETNAMESE TOEIC® LEARNERS

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Abstract

Unlike the first language, the second or foreign language is commonly acquired at varied levels of success. As the significance of vocabulary competence in learning a new language is indisputable, learning strategies used to enhance learning of lexical items of the target language need exploring more thoroughly. The present study was conducted to explore the overall use of vocabulary learning strategies of successful and unsuccessful Vietnamese learners in TOEIC® classes and examine the statistically significant differences between the two groups of EFL learners in correlation with their levels of language proficiency. A vocabulary learning strategies survey adapted from Oxford’s (1990) Strategy Inventory for Language Learning questionnaire was administered to eighteen higher and eighteen lower achievers to obtain self-reported quantitative data. The explanatory information focusing on vocabulary learning strategies of four good and four poor students was collected through semi-structured interviews. The results of the data analysis illustrated the medium use range of vocabulary learning strategies among the target population and the positive relationship between proficiency levels and their vocabulary learning strategy use. In addition, the meaningful information achieved during interviews revealed the similarities and differences in attitudes, perspectives, experiences and learning styles related to vocabulary acquisition of the better and the under-achievers. The validated picture of English vocabulary learning strategy use explored in this study will assist Vietnamese EFL instructors and curriculum designers in practicing learner strategy training and benefit elementary English learners in exploring their own set of appropriate strategies to enhance lexical competence more effectively.

Key words: language learning strategy, vocabulary learning strategies, proficiency level, successful language learners, second language acquisition, Vietnamese EFL learners, TOEIC® learners.
Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my resilient mother, Ngoc Nguyen, who has been bravely fighting against her lung cancer to present as significant spiritual motivation in my life; and my husband Kevin Luong for his sympathy and sacrifice during the time I was pursuing my learning and researching goal. My wonderful family has always been beside me and strengthened me to overcome all the difficulties I encountered during my studying journey which seemed endless.

Thank you for everything and I love you all!
Acknowledgements

After more than one year of intense learning and researching, today I am writing this note of thanks as the finishing touch on my master’s thesis. The process of writing this thesis has undeniably required me to make a lot of effort, so I would like to reflect on the people who have wholeheartedly assisted me throughout the period.

I would first like to express my sincere gratitude to my two main supervisors from Benedictine University in the US – Dr. Sandra Kies and Dr. Olga Lambert, and Dr. Phuong Dzung Pho - the co-supervisor for my thesis from the University of Social Sciences and Humanities in Vietnam for their valuable guidance and patience during this master’s thesis completion. Their thorough understanding and encouraging words considerably motivated me to navigate through rough waters and eventually reach my studying destination.

In addition, I earnestly thank Dr. Dung Le, Dr. Tham Nguyen, and Dr. Tho Le from University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Vietnam. They are not only my professors in the master’s program but also the members of the thesis defense committee, whose constructive feedback and suggestions definitely provided me with new insights towards completing my paper.

Special thanks are due to Ms. Mary Hennessey, the online librarian from Benedictine University, for helping me with referential materials. A number of useful and valuable articles and book chapters referred to in this paper were from her great assistance.

Finally, I would also like to extend the deepest appreciation to my students in the four TOEIC® classes for their excellent collaboration. Without their enthusiastic participation, I would not have had opportunities to successfully finish this research.

Heartfelt thanks!
Declaration

I Nguyen Thi Phuoc Loc hereby declare that this thesis entitled “Vocabulary learning strategies of high and low proficiency Vietnamese TOEIC® learners” submitted to Benedictine University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Linguistics (TESOL Concentration) is entirely my own work. It has not been previously published, as a whole or in part, or submitted to any other institution for any other degree, diploma, or professional qualification.

Research for this work was approved by the Benedictine University Institutional Review Board. IRB Approval Number: #20170727D

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List of Abbreviations

EFL: English as a Foreign Language
ESL: English as a Second Language
SLA: Second Language Acquisition
LLS: Language Learning Strategies
VLS: Vocabulary Learning Strategies
SILL: Strategies Inventory for Language Learning
L1: First Language, Native Language
L2: Second Language
MMR: Mixed Method Research
HP: High Proficiency
LP: Low Proficiency
SPSS: Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
MEM: Memory Strategy
COG: Cognitive Strategy
COM: Compensation Strategy
META: Meta-cognitive Strategy
AFF: Affective Strategy
SOC: Social Strategy
GPA: Grade Point Average
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

In 1980, Broughton pointed out the role of English as a second language as the “passport to social and economic advancement” (p. 6). Indeed, English has gradually become the lingua franca for international business and communication. Consequently, more and more people living in the era of globalization and integration desire to acquire English as their second language. In order to gain a higher level of competence in English, a wise learner must recognize the fact that “lexis is the core or heart of language” (Lewis, 1993, p. 89). Vocabulary is undeniably considered the central component of mastering a language because “without grammar, very little can be conveyed; without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed” (Wilkins, 1972, p. 111). Deficiency of lexical items causes various obstacles for learners when they demonstrate language in all skills ranging from illustrating ideas in speaking and writing tasks to comprehending the listening and reading texts. In 1982, Wallace also agreed that “not being able to find the words you need to express yourself is the most frustrating experience in speaking another language” (p. 9). Unquestionably, an English learner can remarkably improve both communicative skills and literacy skills with a wealthier vocabulary.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Although the significance of vocabulary acquisition in the academic achievement of language learners cannot be doubted under any circumstances, the research into this domain used to dominantly focus on what was learnt rather than how the vocabulary was acquired (Meara, 1980; Crow, 1986). However, starting in the 1980s, the demand for papers in which the vocabulary acquisition process was mainly and deeply discussed was raised. Since the last decade of the twentieth century, the literature has witnessed the concentration of linguists towards the nature of strategies employed to learn foreign language vocabulary through some empirical studies, such as

Nevertheless, there exists a fact that not all language students absorb the knowledge in the same way or find success with the same language learning strategies (LLS). Therefore, apart from aiming at exploring the collection of effective and applicable LLS, researchers have also made great effort to examine the influence of various individual factors on the strategies students utilize for learning a new language, such as language learning attitude (Sadighi & Zarafshan, 2006; Wu, 2012), learner’s gender (Bacon, 1992; Catalan, 2003), learning motivation (Kaylani, 1996; Cohen & Dörnyei, 2002), learning beliefs (Yang, 1999), learning styles (Ehrman & Oxford, 1990; Carson & Longhini, 2002), cultural backgrounds (Yang, 1996; Rao, 2006), and especially academic achievement (Oxford & Nyikos, 1989; Chamot & El-Dinary, 1999; Wei, 2007; Henning & Shulruf, 2011). In general, all these studies reached the conclusion that learners’ differences can affect their selection of language learning strategies to some extent. However, the majority of the studies aforementioned aimed at the population of language learners who study English as their second language rather than a foreign language. To put it differently, there has been obvious scarcity of research on the relationship between the levels of English learners’ proficiency with LLS in general and VLS in particular within the Vietnamese EFL context.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

This empirical study was conducted with a twofold purpose. Specifically, first it aimed to investigate the VLS commonly employed by successful and unsuccessful Vietnamese TOEIC® learners. The findings of the current study portrayed the comprehensive characteristics of Vietnamese EFL learners’ strategies in the English vocabulary acquisition process. The second
target of this paper was to carry out a comparison to examine whether there were statistically significant differences in the set of VLS employed by the two groups of learners at two different levels of academic achievement. In other words, my goal was to clarify the relationship between the English proficiency levels and VLS implementation of TOEIC® learners in Vietnamese EFL teaching and learning environment.

1.3 Research Questions

By investigating the English VLS employed by TOEIC® learners with high and low level of proficiency, the answers for the three following research questions were sought in this study:

1. What are the vocabulary learning strategies used by high achievers in TOEIC® classes?
2. What are the vocabulary learning strategies used by low achievers in TOEIC® classes?
3. To what extent do high and low achievers use different or similar strategies in learning TOEIC® vocabulary?

1.4 Significance of the Study

This study was needed because of the underexplored educational domain associated with Vietnamese EFL learners’ strategies for acquiring lexical items. Many researchers including Rubin (1975), Reiss (1981), Gan, Humphreys, and Hamp-Lyons (2004), Simsek and Balaban (2010), and Gerami and Baighlou (2011) concluded that learning strategies employed by higher achievers are well worth inspecting thoroughly as they considerably benefit the lower ones. Nonetheless, surprisingly limited attention has been paid to the correlation between strategies for learning new English words with the learners’ levels of proficiency. In the context of Vietnam where enriching lexical size always takes priority over any other aspects in the EFL domain, the students, especially the unsuccessful group, find widening their lexical knowledge the most depressing task in their language learning achievement. The findings of this study should absolutely benefit the
Vietnamese EFL students in raising awareness of their own VLS and encouraging them to study self-directedly by adopting and applying appropriate VLS in their language studying procedure. In addition, the application of the study will help expand the role of Vietnamese EFL teachers in instructing and assisting their under-achieving students with developing their own sets of effective VLS. The research results can also be a good reference for Vietnamese educators, especially those who are language curriculum and material designers, so that they can provide the Vietnamese students with a more productive English training environment.
2.1 The Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC® Test)

Along with the progressive trend of internationalization and globalization in all national aspects, the demand for higher levels of English competence has risen as the key qualification for Vietnamese labor. With the aim to build up a skilled, versatile and powerful workforce, Vietnam has adopted TOEIC® as one of the requirements of graduation for university students since 2008. Whether the candidates take the TOEIC® Test in Listening and Reading or Speaking and Writing format, they need to demonstrate their ability to practice communicative English in the professional working environment. This standardized test was the brainchild of Kitaoka Yasuo, a former Vice President of the Institute for International Business Communication (IIBC). The first TOEIC® Test, which was developed by the Educational Testing Service (ETS), drew the attendance of 2,700 candidates in Japan in 1979 (Woodford, 1982). “The primary purpose of the test was to determine the proficiency levels of employees, or potential employees, for human resource planning and development in the contexts of business, industry, and commerce” (TOEIC® User Guide – Listening & Reading, 2013, p. 2). The TOEIC® test has been recognized as a standard for measuring English language competence in daily life and the international working environment of nearly 14,000 companies and organizations in every part of the world. Up to the present, approximately seven million people from 150 countries in Europe, America, Africa, especially Asia, are reported to have taken the TOEIC® Test (Program Data & Analysis, 2016).

Since the test takers are evaluated in listening, reading, speaking, and writing skills in the TOEIC® Test, the test is a set of samples of spoken and written language collected from various settings and situations in different countries all over the world. The TOEIC® Listening and Reading test is a kind of paper-and-pencil test with 200 multiple-choice questions. The duration of the test
is 120 minutes separated into two timed sections (TOEIC® User Guide – Listening & Reading, 2013). The listening test is compiled from live recordings in English of picture description statements, responses to questions, short conversations, and talks. Reading questions require understanding of various written documents such as business letters, advertisements, announcements, memos, etc. (Powers & Powers, 2014). The computer-based TOEIC® Speaking and Writing tests were first established by ETS’s key partners in August 2005. In the speaking test, the test takers are required to produce oral responses to eleven tasks such as reading a text, describing a picture, responding to questions, proposing a solution, and expressing an opinion. The writing test is designed with eight tasks to measure the ability to perform written language in international business at various levels, from sentence to essay. The TOEIC® Speaking and Writing test together with the TOEIC® Listening and Reading test provide both test takers and score users with an exhaustive assessment of candidates’ English language competence (TOEIC® User Guide – Speaking & Writing, 2013). The present study was conducted on TOEIC® learners and a Listening – Reading version of this standardized test was employed as an assessment tool to determine the proficiency levels of the research participants.

2.2 Vocabulary and Vocabulary Knowledge

Given that building lexical competence is the cornerstone in learning a language, the question “What is vocabulary?” has been perceived in various ways in many vocabulary studies. Barcroft, Sunderman and Schmitt (2011) described vocabulary as the entire collection of words in a language, and “the mental presentation of a word contains information about the spelling, pronunciation, grammatical category, and meaning of the word” (p. 572). Lessard-Clouston (2013) characterized units of vocabulary as “single items and phrases or chunks of several words which convey a particular meaning” (p. 2). Orthographically, “a word is any sequence of letters (and a
limited number of other characteristics such as hyphen and apostrophe) bounded on their side by a space or punctuation mark” (Carter, 1998, p. 4). Laufer (1997) was under the impression that if a learner has insufficient competence of lexical items of a certain text, they are incapable of reaching a thorough understanding of the text in either their mother tongue or in a foreign language. In addition, Laufer (1998) insisted on the vital role of vocabulary knowledge as the main dissimilarity between an L1 and L2 user. To put it in another way, regardless of how well the language learners master the grammatical structures and pronunciation, their inadequate lexicon to express diverse interactive meanings makes their foreign language communicative competence considerably less meaningful (McCarthy, 1990).

As the significance of expanding vocabulary has achieved agreement among scholars, identifying the aspects involved in knowing a word has also drawn the attention of many linguists. Numerically, Adolphs and Schmitt (2003) specified that language learners are required to comprehend at least three thousand word-families for communicating and ninety percent of the language units employed by native speakers in the target language. As a pioneer to suggest continua involved in knowing a word, Cronbach (1942) offered a framework with two main properties, which are knowing the meaning and accessing that knowledge. While the former notion included generalization (enabling one to define the word), breadth of meaning (retaining various meanings of the word), and precision of meaning (properly practicing the word in multiple contexts), the latter one related to availability (effectively applying the word) and application (choosing the suitable use of the word). Lack of spelling, pronunciation and morpho-syntactic attributes was the limitation of Cronbach’s continuum (Qian, 1998).

Coupled with Qian’s (1998) point of view, which was focused on the lexical elements, Kame’enui and Baumann (2012) regarded comprehension of the system of spelling in the target
language as the decisive factor of vocabulary instruction. Along with suggesting eight assumptions as criteria for knowing a word, Richards (1976) provided a wide range of demonstrative examples of word families for the significant role of realizing the underlying form and derivation in vocabulary competence. Expressly, Richards defined knowing a word as recognizing eight following aspects:

1. its relative frequency in the language
2. its register characteristics, which may include social, temporal and geographic variations, and field and mode of discourse
3. the syntactic behavior associated with the word
4. its underlying form and the derivations that can be made from this form
5. the network of associations between that word and other words in the language, which may include such associative links as antonymy, synonym, and subordinate, coordinate, and superordinate classifications
6. its semantic features and connotations
8. the different meanings associated with the word. (pp. 78-84).

With similar experience, Bonet (1992) believed that “a Niagara of words” (p. 45) can be built without difficulty by connecting some affixes and root words together, which results in an enjoyable and effortless vocabulary learning process. Conclusively, the ability to perceive the way a word is formed and extended is a tactical language learning skill for learners as it helps not only to reduce the number of new lexical items but also to improve the control over the verbal meaning of the text (Kruse, 1979).

In a separate development, Teichroew and Francine (1982), Nation (1990, 2001), Schmitt (2000), and Webb (2005) commonly mentioned “receptive” and “productive” as the two
representatives of language knowledge. While the “receptive” phase covers understanding the lexical unit from listening or reading, meaningfully producing the language by speaking and writing is “productive”, the second factor of vocabulary comprehension (Nation, 2001). Balancing development of both the capabilities noticeably enhances the productiveness of interacting in the target language. Based on the classification of vocabulary competence previously mentioned, Nation (2001) developed an extensive model of “What is involved in knowing a word” (p. 27) with three main language aspects including form, meaning, and use of the target word (Table 1).

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Form</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>P</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>spoken</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>What does the word sound like?</td>
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<tr>
<td>How is the word pronounced?</td>
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<tr>
<td>written</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What does the word look like?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How is the word written and spelled?</td>
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<tr>
<td>word parts</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>What parts are recognizable in this word?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>What word parts are needed to express the meaning?</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Meaning</th>
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<tr>
<td>form and meaning</td>
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<tr>
<td>What meaning does this word form signal?</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What word form can be used to express this meaning?</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>concept and referents</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is included in the concept?</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What items can the concept refer to?</td>
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<tr>
<td>associations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What other words does this make us think of?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What other words could we use instead of this one?</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Use'</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>grammatical functions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In what patterns does the word occur?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In what patterns must we use this word?</td>
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</tr>
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</table>
Covering the key dimensions in Richards’s (1976) as well as associating spoken, written form and collocations affirmed the substance of this comprehensive framework.

**2.3 Language Learning Strategies**

Despite its not being a new concept in the domain of language educating, it has never been easy to clarify the definition of language learning strategies (LLS). The most abstract explanation belongs to Ellis (2008) who defined language LLS as “both general approaches and specific actions or techniques used to learn an L2” (p. 705). In 1986, Weinstein and Mayer agreed that LLS are behavioural and mental activities that learners incorporate when learning language to affect their “encoding process” (p. 315). LLS were the “specific actions” that the second language (L2) students utilize with the aim to make language learning “easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situations” (Oxford, 1990, p. 8). By the same token, Holec (1981) emphasized the positive effects of LLS on the autonomy in learning language of the students. For several years, the question of whether LLS should be considered as deliberate or unintentional has been the subject of discussion among researchers. While some linguists avoided declaring this issue manifestly when giving definitions of LLS, Chamot (1987) presented them as methods or actions intentionally taken by learners to expedite their learning. Similarly, LLS are the “activities consciously chosen by learners for the purpose of regulating their own language learning” (Griffiths, 2007, p. 1). Even though the students may not be fully aware of their
LLS, assisting them to employ appropriate approaches or to profit from the techniques they utilize is what a language instructor should be responsible for (Nyikos & Oxford, 1993).

It is undeniable that there have been various perceptions of LLS; however, the concept of LLS has been seen as “a somewhat fuzzy one” and “not easy to tie down” (Ellis, 1994, p. 529). Moreover, applied linguists did not pay sufficient attention to research the learning strategies of vocabulary, an element of LLS, until the late of 1970s. That was the reason Meara pointed out in one of her articles in 1980 that vocabulary acquisition was neglected in learning strategies even though most language learners regarded learning new words as their “greatest single source of problems” (p. 1). Holding the same point of view, Schmitt (1997) affirmed that the intersection where vocabulary and learning strategies meet each other “has attracted a noticeable lack of attention” (p. 199). The great works of research mentioned above indicate that the significance of strategies for learning language in general and for enhancing lexical size in particular should be considered as one of the top study topics in the field of second language acquisition (SLA).

2.4 Taxonomy of Learning Strategies

2.4.1 Taxonomy of language learning strategies. The notion of LLS is varied not only in terms of definition but also in its classification. A great deal of endeavours, indeed, have been made by experts since the 1970s to put various types of strategies into categories. Rubin (1975), Stern (1975), and Naiman, Fröhlich, and Todesco (1978) were some of the first scholars who gathered the features of LLS by investigating strategies employed by successful students. Five main types of LLS were specified as “(1) active task approach, (2) realisation of language as system, (3) realisation of language as a means of communication and interaction, (4) management of affective demands, and (5) monitoring L2 performance” in the study of Naiman et al. (1978, p. 30-33). Three years later, Rubin (1981) proposed her first primary category with strategies
affecting learning directly encompassing clarification/verification, monitoring, memorization, guessing/inductive inferencing, deductive reasoning, and practise. Two processes contributing indirectly to learning, which are creating opportunities for practice and production tricks belong to the secondary category.

In 1990, Oxford developed a detailed systematization for examining strategies for learning language. In her classification, Oxford highlighted the differentiation between two major types of strategies which are direct and indirect strategies. The strategies in the first category are divided into three subtypes: Memory (MEM), Cognitive (COG), and Compensation Strategies (COM) (Table 2). These strategies “directly involve the target language” and “require mental processing of the language” (Oxford, 1990, p. 37). The second type, indirect strategies with Metacognitive (MET), Affective (AFF) and Social Strategies (SOC) “provide indirect support for language learning through focusing, planning, evaluating, seeking opportunities, controlling anxiety, increasing cooperation and empathy and other means” (Oxford, 1990, p. 151) (Table 3). The six subgroups are further classified into nineteen subsets.

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Direct strategies</th>
<th>Representative strategies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Memory strategies</td>
<td>Creating mental linkages (grouping, associating and elaborating, placing new words into a context)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Applying images and sounds (using imagery, semantic mapping, using keywords, representing sounds in memory)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reviewing well (structured reviewing)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Cognitive strategies

- Employing action (using physical response or sensation, using mechanical techniques)
- Practicing (repeating, formally practicing with sounds and writing systems, recognizing and using formulas and patterns, recombining, practicing naturalistically)
- Receiving and sending messages (getting the idea quickly, using resources for receiving and sending messages)
- Analysing and reasoning (reasoning deductively, analysing expressions, analysing contrastively, translating, transferring)
- Creating structure for input and output (taking notes, summarizing, highlighting)

### Compensation strategies

- Guessing intelligently (using linguistic and other clues)
- Overcoming limitations in speaking and writing (switching to the mother tongue, getting help, using mime and gesture, avoiding communication partially or totally, selecting the topic, adjusting or approximating the message, coining words, using a circumlocution or synonym)

---

**Table 3**

*Indirect language learning strategies (Oxford, 1990, p.136)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indirect strategies</th>
<th>Representative strategies</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metacognitive strategies</td>
<td>Centring your learning (overviewing and linking with already known material, paying attention, delaying speech production to focus on listening)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Arranging and planning your learning (finding out about language learning, organizing, setting goals and objectives, identifying the purpose of a language task, planning for a language task, seeking practice opportunities)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Evaluating your learning (self-monitoring, self-evaluation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affective strategies</td>
<td>Lowering your anxiety (using progressive relaxation, deep breathing or meditation, using music and laughter)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Encouraging yourself (making positive statements, taking risks wisely, rewarding yourself)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Taking your emotional temperature (listening to your body, using a checklist, writing a language learning diary, discussing your feelings with someone else)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social strategies</td>
<td>Asking questions (asking for clarification, verification or correction)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cooperating with others (cooperating with peers and proficient users of the new language)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Empathizing with others (developing cultural understanding, becoming aware of others’ thoughts and feelings)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although this framework of Oxford (1990) provided “the most comprehensive”, “detailed and systematic” “classification of learning strategies to date” (Ellis, 1994, p. 539 and Radwan,
2011, p. 119), there was still disagreement among researchers on its reliability. For instance, Schmitt (1997) indicated one of its disadvantages as “some strategies could easily fit into two or more groups, making their classification difficult” (p. 207). However, this categorization scheme laid the foundation for the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL), a self-reporting questionnaire with fifty close-ended items. Each question in this list was designed in the form of five-point Likert scale ranging from “never or almost never true of me” to “always or almost always true of me”. SILL has been the most often used instrument in research investigating students’ strategies for learning various languages in several countries up to the present.

Another attempt to categorize language learning strategies was the Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach by O’Malley and Chamot (1990). Based on cognitive theory, the two authors introduced an alternative classification model of LLS with three separated forms of strategies:

1. Metacognitive strategies involve planning for studying and considering its procedure, such as selective attention, monitoring learner’s own speech, self-assessment, etc.

2. Cognitive strategies consist of specific learning activities, such as inferencing, summarising, deducing, note-taking, and elaboration, etc.

3. Social/ affective strategies are interaction and social activities to work with classmates or to ask for teacher’s help, such as questioning for explanation, cooperation and self-talking, etc.

The taxonomy designed by O’Malley and Chamot (1990) achieved remarkable notice when it was presented. Nonetheless, the complementation of cognitive and metacognitive strategies provoked controversy among linguists about the validity of this rubric. The combination of these two strategies was considered more productive than employing each separately as Anderson
(2002) found “developing metacognitive awareness may also lead to the development of stronger cognitive skills” (p. 1).

2.4.2 Taxonomy of vocabulary learning strategies. In addition to strategies for learning language overall, some researchers have focused on building a theoretical system for vocabulary learning strategies (VLS). As a pioneer in this field, Ahmed (1989) put the strategies students use to learn vocabulary into two groups named as macro and micro strategies. While the former covers strategies related to practicing, note-taking, memorizing, and employing various sources of information, the latter refers to the specific activities of each macro strategy.

Based on the SILL of Oxford (1990), Gu and Johnson established a Vocabulary Learning Questionnaire (VLQ) in 1996. The questionnaire is comprised of 108 items subsumed into eight main groups: (1) beliefs about vocabulary learning illustrating how words should be memorized, acquired or studied; (2) metacognitive strategies encompassing selective attention and self-initiation strategies that help students select necessary vocabulary to learn; (3) guessing strategies through which learners use background knowledge or linguistic cues to infer the meaning of unknown words; (4) dictionary strategies referring to using dictionary in multi levels; (5) note-taking strategies orienting to meaning or usage of vocabulary; (6) rehearsal strategies using word lists as along with repetition in oral and visual form; (7) encoding strategies consisting of association, imagery, visual, auditory, semantic, contextual encoding and using word-structure; and (8) activation strategies allowing learners use new words in different contexts.

As Schmitt (1997) observed that there was “the lack of a comprehensive list or taxonomy of lexically-focus strategies” (p. 199), he introduced an exhaustive inventory of VLS based on the distinction between discovery and consolidation. The first part, “the kind of strategies used by an individual when faced with discovering a new word’s meaning without resource to another
person’s expertise” (Schmitt, 1997, p. 207), were nine determination items and five social items. The second part included social strategies (3 items), memory strategies (27 items), cognitive strategies (9 items) and metacognitive strategies (5 items), which contribute to consolidating a word that the learner encountered previously. Among the strategies focusing on memorising the target lexical items, the author mentioned “cognate”, “peg method”, “loci method”, “configuration” and “semantic feature grids”, which were considered uncommon and unfamiliar to non-majored language learners (Omaar, 2016).

Another VLS categorization was proposed by Nation (2001), a specialist in the field of vocabulary acquisition. The isolation between the source of new words and the process of acquiring them was the fundamental of this classification scheme. Nation (2001) divided the procedure of learning vocabulary into three stages, namely planning, sources, and processes. The first stage refers to the student’s selection of words and aspects of words to learn as well as the techniques and the plans to repeat those new words. In the second stage, learners analyse the words for detailed information, such as using context, consulting reference source or taking advantages of the relation between the first and the second language. The third stage with noticing, retrieving and generating, plays significant role in developing knowledge of the vocabulary. By noticing, which means grasping and repeating the word orally or visually, the student takes the first steps to memorize that word. Next, recalling process to set a connection between the new word and an already known one is retrieval strategy. Lastly, with the aim to transfer a new word into the learner’s “intake” entirely, some such generating activities as using that word in context or with collocation should be done by the learner.

Obviously, the overlap in classifying learning strategies exists among various taxonomies from different researchers, and Oxford (1990) perceived this notion as follows:
There is no complete agreement on exactly what strategies are; how many strategies exist; how they should be defined, demarcated, and categorized; and whether it is possible to create a real, scientifically validated hierarchy of strategies… Classification conflicts are inevitable. (p. 17).

In general, the diversified VLS frameworks designed by researchers mentioned above all have been driven by some common theoretical perspectives. The first one is the selective attention the learners pay to the lexical items. Next, those VLS inventories cover some cognitive techniques for memorising including guessing meaning, looking up the dictionary, note-taking, and listing new words. Lastly, the researchers all agreed on concentrating on using new words with contextualization, seeking opportunities to employ the known-words, and combining words in collocation. No matter what conceptions the researchers rely on when establishing their taxonomies, all their products are series of beneficial and practical methods considerably devoted to the success of learners’ SLA. Among them, the learning strategy taxonomy of Oxford (1990) presented in SILL has emerged as the most powerful research instrument to investigate LLS in the domain of EFL and ESL educating. “According to research reports and articles published in the English language within the last 10-15 years, the SILL appears to be the only language learning strategy instrument that has been extensively checked for reliability and validated in multiple ways” (Oxford and Burry-Stock, 1995, p. 4). At the count in 1996, this paper-and-pencil survey had been administered to approximately 10,000 language learners (Oxford, 1996). Additionally, “SILL remains the most extensively used classification scheme worldwide until present time” (Ali & Paramasivam, 2016, p. 139). The widespread use of SILL is explainable as the fifty closed-ended questions in this survey not only are easy for informants to handle, but these items also can productively measure the rapport between strategy use and various learning differences variables.
SILL was selected as a quantitative data collection device in this study because of the reputation of Oxford’s (1990) strategy taxonomy and the popularity of SILL in the domain of EFL and ESL educating research.

2.5 Learning Strategies of Successful and Unsuccessful Language Learners

It is equally common knowledge that most human beings succeed in acquiring their mother tongue, whereas success in second or foreign language acquisition differs from learner to learner. The differential success of good and poor second or foreign language learners has drawn the attention of many researchers since the mid-seventies (Rubin, 1975, 1981; Stern, 1975; Naiman et al., 1978; O’Malley & Chamot, 1990; Vann & Abraham, 1990). These early investigations were conducted with the underlying assumption that the more effective language learners possess a distinctive set of characteristics and learning strategies. Also, pioneers in researching good language learners believed that thorough understanding of the productive language learning process would not only enhance language teaching quality but also aid the unsuccessful students in overcoming difficulties in their language learning process. The three major problems that language learners face during their SLA process come from the inevitable dominance of the first language as a reference system, the impossibility of simultaneously paying attention to both linguistics forms and communication, and the dilemma between rational and intuitive learning (Stern, 1975). The author also stated that the students’ ability to deal with such learning obstacles would “distinguish the good from the poor learner” (p. 310).

Rubin (1975), who took the initiative in examining successful language learners, identified and explained seven typical features attributing to their academic achievement encompassing as follows:

1. being a willing and accurate guesser,
2. having strong drive to get message across and learn from communication
3. often not being inhibited and being willing to appear foolish for reasonable communication results
4. being prepared to attend to form
5. practicing
6. monitoring their own speech and the speech of others
7. paying attention to meaning. (p. 45-47)

Moreover, the author also suggested a number of factors that the effective language learning strategy use might depend on including the learning task, the learning stage, the age of the learner, the learning context, individual styles, and the cultural differences. In her follow-up study carried out four years later, Rubin (1981) expanded her investigation into the learning behaviours of good language learners by observing the cognitive processes directly and indirectly contributing to the second language learning process. She pointed out that successful language learners have the ability to (1) determine their most appropriate studying approach, (2) organize their own studying, (3) think creatively, (4) seize the opportunities to practice language, (5) use memorisation, (6) get familiar with uncertainty, (7) learn from their mistakes, (8) apply the language knowledge, (9) take advantage of situation and environment to enhance language understanding, (10) make guesses intelligently, (11) memorize the words or sentences as a whole, (12) study the structures of sentences, (13) express their ideas skilfully, and (14) employ all kinds of literacy forms.

By the same token, Oxford (1990) asserted that “successful learners tend to use strategies such as finding practice opportunities, guessing intelligently, using patterns, treating the language as a rule system, and communication often in the language” (p. 362). Similarly, Reiss (1981)
clarified that specifying learning tasks, looking for meaning by making up examples or relating new information to previous knowledge, and internalising information unconsciously were what effective language learners are usually good at. On the other hand, Reiss’s (1981) observation revealed that the less successful language learners “do not seem to be aware of, or have not yet found, a particular learning style” (p. 125). The comparisons carried out by other researchers resulted that the unsuccessful language learners employ smaller range of learning strategies with less frequency of use and have lower level of ability to handle learning dilemmas or apply proper strategies to the assigned learning tasks (Stern, 1975; O’Malley & Chamot, 1990; Ehrman & Oxford, 1995; Green & Oxford, 1995; Vann & Abraham, 1990). In her later study, Chamot (2004) defined successful language learners as “strategic learners” who “have metacognitive knowledge about their own thinking and learning approaches, a good understanding of what task entails, and the ability to orchestrate the strategies that best meet task demands and their own learning strategies” (p. 14). This perception was later justified by the study findings of Magogwe and Oliver (2007), Lai (2009), Simsek and Balaban (2010), Nguyen and Godwyll (2010), Gerami and Baighlou (2011), Salahshour, Sharifi and Salahshour (2013), and Ali and Paramasivam (2016) who ascertained the remarkable weight of meta-cognitive strategies in language learning.

2.6 Language Proficiency and Learning Strategy Use

Learning strategy use of learners varies considerably according to such factors as age, gender, personality, aptitude, purpose, motivation, belief, attitude, culture, learning stage, teacher expectation, task requirements, and level of proficiency (Rubin, 1975; Abraham & Vann, 1987; Chamot & Kupper, 1989; Oxford, 1990). Amongst them, the notion of language proficiency considerably attracted the notice of many researchers when they investigated the learning strategies of language learners. However, it has been difficult for those trying to define
“proficiency” concretely. This term was perceived as “the degree of competence or the capability in a given language demonstrated by an individual at a given point in time independent of a specific textbook, chapter in the book, or pedagogical method” by Brière (1971). Ten years later, Farhady (1982) interpreted the concept vaguely, “language proficiency is not a one-dimensional phenomenon and learners are not homogenous in their proficiency in various language skills” (p. 46).

Not only have the definitions of this term varied, there has also been variation in the assessment approach used to identify levels of language proficiency. Researchers having interest in examining the relationship between learning strategy use and proficiency have employed a multitude of methods to measure the language proficiency of the research participants. The evaluation tools have included language proficiency tests (Nisbet, Tindall & Arroyo, 2005; Abedini, Rahimi & Zare-ee, 2011; Gerami & Baighlou, 2011; Salahshour et al., 2013), language achievement tests (Ok, 2003; Ali & Paramasivam, 2016), placement examinations (Gan et al., 2004; Cephe & Yeşilbursa, 2006; Lai, 2009), students’ GPAs in English courses (Shmais, 2003; Simsek & Balaban, 2010), duration of language study (Khalil, 2005; Tse, 2011), or self-rating proficiency levels (Bedell & Oxford, 1996; Wharton, 2000; Su, 2005).

Regarding to the results of those studies in which SILL was employed in the investigation into the correlation between language proficiency and LLS use, many researchers reached the conclusion that the more proficient language learners utilize more appropriate strategies in studying language more frequently than the less proficient ones do (Magogwe & Oliver, 2007; Lai, 2009; Yilmaz, 2010; Gerami & Baighlou, 2011; Salahshour et al., 2013; Ali & Paramasivam, 2016). On the other hand, some others have found no significant correlation between the language
achievements of learners and their application of strategies to study language (Shmais, 2003; Salem, 2006).

Apart from the differences in frequency of integrating learning strategies among language learners at different levels of proficiency, the types of strategies they use to study the target language were deeply inspected. For instance, Lai (2009) utilized Oxford’s (1990) SILL survey to collect data related to self-reported LLS of 418 EFL learners in Taiwan. The research findings revealed a frequent use of compensation strategy in both high and low proficiency groups. In addition, memory was reported as the least commonly used strategy by successful English learners, while cognitive strategy was least favoured by their unsuccessful peers. Nevertheless, the picture of EFL learners’ LLS use was portrayed differently by Gerami and Baighlou (2011). With the aim to retrieve in-depth information about the application of LLS among Iranian-speaking English learners, the two authors also utilized Oxford’s (1990) SILL survey to inspect the implementation of LLS by 200 good and poor EFL students. Not only were the wider ranges of successful students’ LLS use in all subcategories disclosed; the quantitative data gained from the survey also revealed that while the favourite learning strategies of the better students was meta-cognitive, the under-achievers tended to apply surface level cognitive strategies. Additionally, both groups of students utilized affective strategies with the least frequency. Also recruiting Iranian-speaking English learners as research participants and SILL as research instrument, Salahshour et al. (2013) agreed with Gerami and Baighlou (2011) about the most preferred strategy types of the two groups and the least favoured strategy types of the higher achievers. However, meta-cognitive, rather than affective strategy, was ranked as the least often used strategy by the unsuccessful English learners in the study of Salahshour et al. (2013).
In a more recent attempt with more concentration on lexical items in language learning, Seffar (2014) carried out an exploratory study in Morocco to assess the VLS of 124 tertiary students in correlation with their English proficiency. The proficiency of the participants was determined by the subjects’ study levels, and SILL (Oxford, 1990) was employed as the quantitative research instrument in this project. Apart from the significant relationship between the participants’ English proficiency and their adoption of VLS, the research findings revealed further information about their preferences of specific VLS subcategories. Expressly, the students with higher language proficiency applied compensation and memory strategies more frequently, whereas the lower achievers preferred meta-cognitive, cognitive, affective and social strategies.

Both the participants’ variables and the distinctive features of the research environments may account for the differences in findings of the aforementioned studies. From an instructional point of view, not only the relationship between language proficiency and LLS use is controversial, but the overall picture of LLS used by language learners at high and low level of proficiency is also varied in EFL literature.

2.7 English Vocabulary Teaching and Learning in Vietnam

According to Do (2007), during the time of the Vietnam war, from 1954 to 1975, the north and the south of Vietnam suffered striking differences in both political institutions and foreign language educating patterns. Explicitly, the communist government in the North preferred Russian and Chinese while the capitalist authority in the South chose English and French as the mandatory subjects taught in junior and senior high schools. The reunification in 1975 along with a wide range of its subsequent changes in economic and politic schemes emphasized the role of Russian and also shrank the popularity of English in the entire Vietnamese territory. It was not until Doi Moi (Renovation) – the open-door policy in 1986, that English teaching and learning regained its
dominance over the other foreign languages in the Vietnamese national education. The economic reform called for international communication, economic cooperation and trendy globalization within a cross-cultural environment. Responding to this situation, compulsory training in English was mandated for all students at secondary and upper-secondary levels, which has led to the mushrooming of a plethora of English language centers and institutions all over the country. However, although the Ministry of Education and Training claimed that they took cognizance of the significance of communicative competence, the English curriculum adapted in Vietnam was mainly grammar-based (Hoang, 2010).

In accordance with the concentration on grammatical structures, the Grammar-Translation Method (GTM) has been dominantly employed to instruct English language in general and English vocabulary in particular (Pham, 2000). Apart from the classical teaching approach, the discrete-point assessing method targeted at evaluating examinees’ grammatical and lexical proficiency out of context has been implemented in all English tests, even in such a gate-keeping test as the National University Entrance Examination. Stated differently, trying hard to master the knowledge of grammar and vocabulary is the top priority of Vietnamese students when dealing with English as a subject in class, and spending time on practicing speaking and listening to English is relatively ignored by both the teachers and Vietnamese-speaking English learners. Consequently, poor ability in communicating with the target language speakers is the obvious result of this old-fashioned English teaching and learning style.

In an article posted on an online newspaper, after discussing the poor English training material, the unreasonable teaching method and the insufficiency of qualified English teachers in Vietnam, Nguyen (2007) cast a light on the surprising reality of vocabulary learning among secondary students. Those students were encouraged to copy four pages of a vocabulary list in
order to memorize the English lexical items every day. Because of the belief that vocabulary acquisition is simply looking up the primary meaning of the unknown words in a bilingual dictionary, Vietnamese-speaking learners hardly know how to use an English word contextually or pronounce it correctly even in the cases that they can recognize the word (Nguyen & Khuat, 2003). As a result, 86.8 percent of grade 12 students in Ho Chi Minh City confessed their lack of confidence in speaking English despite their previous seven years of studying this foreign language (Kim Lien, 2006).

Moreover, in an online article by WOW English - a language center in Ho Chi Minh City, the writer discussed four myths leading to the ineffectiveness of Vietnamese students’ English vocabulary acquisition. Apart from copying new words several times and disregarding the pronunciation of the words, forcing themselves to study all new words they encounter while studying English was also a burden to language learners. The writer advised the English learners to give the top priority to words which are frequently used in daily conversation or related to their specific studying and working major. Last but not least, studying words separately from topics and contexts was mentioned as one of the key factors contributing to Vietnamese students’ difficulties in retaining English lexical items (‘‘4 lầm tưởng của sinh viên khi học từ vựng tiếng Anh’’, n.d.).

To sum up, recruiting rote memorization without selection, relying on bilingual dictionaries, underestimating the importance of pronunciation and using context, and ignoring same-topic-words are the frequent strategies applied by Vietnamese students to learn the English lexicon. There is a wide selection of effective VLS that they need to be familiarized with; however, the existing literature lacks exhaustive research into the VLS use of Vietnamese-speaking English learners. In addition, although a number of scholars have investigated the relationship between the implementation of language learning strategies and various individual differences, whether the
English proficiency levels of Vietnamese TOEIC® learners correlate with their VLS demands much more attention. It was my goal as an EFL teacher to conduct this study on VLS with my students in TOEIC® classes to explore their current situation and inspire them to develop their own set of effective VLS.
CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

There were two research issues considered in this study. First, the VLS that the successful and unsuccessful Vietnamese learners frequently use when they study English lexical items were inspected. The second one was the question whether there were statistically significant differences in the VLS use of the two groups of TOEIC® learners who were at two different levels of English language proficiency. Therefore, the three following research questions were focused on in this study:

1. What are the vocabulary learning strategies used by high achievers in TOEIC® classes?
2. What are the vocabulary learning strategies used by low achievers in TOEIC® classes?
3. To what extent do high and low achievers use different or similar strategies in learning TOEIC® vocabulary?

3.1 Design of the Study

The research method employed in this study was Mixed Method Research (MMR) focusing on “collecting, analysing, and mixing both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study” (Creswell & Clark, 2007, p. 5) to understand the research problems. MMR was selected to design this study because “when an investigator combines statistical trends (quantitative data) with stories and personal experiences (qualitative data), this collective strength provides a better understanding of the research problem than either form of data alone” (Creswell, 2015, p. 2). Indeed, separately employing either quantitative or qualitative study approach to examine any research questions will result in merely partial comprehending of the target problems (Johnson & Gray, 2010; Schmitt, 2010) as “each research method has its own strengths and weaknesses” (Table 4), according to Creswell (2015, p. 5).
Table 4

*Advantages and limitations of qualitative and quantitative research (Creswell, 2015, p. 5).*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualitative Research</th>
<th>Disadvantages</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advantages</td>
<td>Disadvantages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Provide detailed perspectives of a few people</td>
<td>- Has limited generalizability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Captures the voices of participants</td>
<td>- Provides only soft data (not hard data, such as numbers)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Allow participants’ experiences to be understood in context</td>
<td>- Studies few people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Is based on the views of participants, not of the researcher</td>
<td>- Is highly subjective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Appeals to people’s enjoyment of stories</td>
<td>- Minimizes use of researcher’s expertise due to reliance on participants</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quantitative Research</th>
<th>Disadvantages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advantages</td>
<td>Disadvantages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Draws conclusions for large numbers of people</td>
<td>- Is impersonal, dry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Analyzes data efficiently</td>
<td>- Does not record the words of participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Investigates relationships within data</td>
<td>- Provides limited understanding of the context of participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Examines probable causes and effects</td>
<td>- Is largely researcher-driven</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Controls bias</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Appeals to people’s preference for numbers</td>
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</table>

In order to exploit the combined strengths of both data gathering approaches, the MMR was employed with two main phases occurring in order in this study. This sequential structure of the study also gave a little more emphasis on the quantitative component rather than the qualitative
one, producing a QUAN → qual model. To be more precise, first a self-reported survey was administered to the research participants to collect the quantitative data and then in the qualitative period, more explanatory information related to the study object was acquired through semi-structured interviews. During the process of qualitative data gathering, the participants were expected to provide explanatory information focusing more on vocabulary learning. The interviewees’ acknowledgement was used to modify and explain the response patterns gained from the questionnaire data analysis. These respondents were purposefully drawn from the group of questionnaire respondents, which resulted in the nested sampling for the qualitative data collecting procedure. Having positive learning attitudes and being fluent speakers in the mother tongue were the criteria for recruiting the interviewees. Purposive sample was selected for this qualitative data collection because “the logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases for in-depth study. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the inquiry” (Patton, 2015, p. 264). Triangulation was the primary purpose of implementing both quantitative and qualitative research approaches in this study. With MMR, the results of the analysing process of one dataset was validated with those of the other and the statistical test as well, which contributed to ensure the reliability of the research findings. As this “explanatory sequential” framework was defined as “easy and straightforward” by Creswell (2015, p. 6), it is considered suitable and manageable for novice researchers.

3.2 Participants

The study consent form was sent to fifty-eight participants, who were learners from four private TOEIC® classes in Ho Chi Minh City in Vietnam. This was convenience sampling as there were only four TOEIC® classes in the small language centre at the time this study was carried out.
They attended English classes twice a week with two hours for each lesson. Their course registration forms said that their ages ranged from twenty to twenty-nine and they came from various provinces and cities in Vietnam. Most of them were undergraduates while the others were postgraduates, but they had some common characteristics. For example, all of them had been learning English as foreign language since they were in grade six at their secondary schools. However, English was not considered as important as science subjects at their high schools, so they did not spend an adequate amount of time and effort on learning and practising this foreign language. In addition, the English teaching methodology at high schools in Vietnam they experienced was predominantly the Grammar Translation Method which emphasized teaching grammar rules and instructing vocabulary out of context.

3.3 Instrumentation

3.3.1 Achievement test. In this study, a sample test of TOEIC® Listening and Reading (Test of English for International Communication) was administered to assess the participants’ levels of English proficiency. This test was selected because its format was familiar to the participants, all of whom were attending the training courses focusing on the TOEIC® Listening and Reading certificate. There were 200 multiple-choice questions in this paper-and-pencil test, and the test duration was 120 minutes separated into two timed sections. The Listening test was organized with live recordings in English of picture description statements, responses to questions, short conversations, and short talks (TOEIC® User Guide – Listening & Reading, 2013). The content of this Listening sample test was adapted from the Economy TOEIC® 1000 Listening Comprehension Volume 1 and Volume 2. Specifically, parts 1 and 2 were extracted from Actual Test 5 of Economy TOEIC® 1000 Listening Comprehension Volume 1 (pages 61 - 67). Parts 3 and 4 were from Actual Test 3 of Economy TOEIC® 1000 Listening Comprehension Volume 2
The Reading questions required comprehending of such various written materials as memorandum, advertisements, announcements, and business letters, etc. (Powers & Powers, 2014, p. 2). This Reading sample test was randomly selected from Jim’s TOEIC® 1000 Reading Comprehension with Part 5 from Actual Test 7 (pages 188 – 192), Part 6 from Actual Test 4 (pages 104 – 107), and Part 7 from Actual Test 1 (pages 14 – 33) (See Appendix B for the sample questions of the TOEIC® Reading Test). Those were popular textbooks assisting good preparation for the TOEIC® candidates in Vietnam. The sources of the test were drawn from different textbooks and different actual tests in order to minimize the possibility of the case that the students had been familiar with those testing items before. In that case, the assessing result would be regarded less reliable.

3.3.2 Questionnaire. “Questionnaires are any written instruments that present respondents with a series of questions or statements to which they are to react either by writing out their answers or selecting from among existing answers” (Brown, 2001, p. 6). This research device has been trusted as one of the most powerful means to collect a wide array of information from a large number of informants in a short time (O’Malley & Chamot, 1990; Gu & Johnson, 1996; Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010). In the present mixed-method study, an adapted version of Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) version 7.0 (Oxford, 1990, p. 293-300) was utilized as an instrument for the quantitative data collection. Ellis (1994) asserted this self-reported survey as “the most comprehensive classification of learning strategies to date” (p. 539). SILL, indeed, has been commonly used in numerous research in the field of ESL and EFL teaching and learning until recent years (Ali & Paramasivam, 2016; Erdogan & Ozdemir, 2017; Rachmawaty, Wello, Akil & Dollah, 2018). In the original SILL, there were fifty five-point Likert-scale questions associated with six types of language learning strategies, which were memory strategies (MEM - part A - 9
questions), cognitive strategies (COG - part B - 14 questions), compensation strategies (COM - part C - 6 questions), meta-cognitive strategies (META - part D - 9 questions), affective strategies (AFF - part E - 6 questions) and social strategies (SOC - part F - 6 questions). According to the author, learners with the mean scores under 2.5 on any given part of the instrument are low strategy users for that specific strategy type, learners who have a mean of 3.5 and above are high strategy users, and the rest are medium strategy users. Fifty questions in SILL were composed with basic grammatical structures and simple vocabulary which were suitable to the level of proficiency of the target population in the present study (See Appendix C for the content of SILL).

However, as the Oxford’s (1990) SILL was originally developed for inspecting LLS in general, this questionnaire was adapted according to the research purpose and the conducting context of the current study. In other words, I decided to make some changes with the content and the format of the original SILL so that the survey could be more vocabulary-focused and more applicable to the Vietnamese setting. Specifically, item 18 (COG) – *I first skim an English passage (read it quickly) then go back and read carefully*, item 23 (COG) – *I make summaries of information that I hear or read in English*, item 28 (COM) – *I try to guess what other person will say next in English*, and item 50 (SOC) – *I try to learn about the culture of English speakers* which did not directly aim at vocabulary studying were omitted. In addition, I eliminated item 43 (AFF) – *I write down my feelings in a language learning diary* from the adapted questionnaire in this study as this strategy was not practical in the context of Vietnam. Keeping a language learning diary as a measure of emotional and psychological support during learning language was unfamiliar to Vietnamese English learners. Briefly, unlike the original SILL by Oxford (1990) consisting of fifty statements of English learning strategies, the adapted version of the questionnaire included forty-five items distributed as in Table 5.
Table 5

*Distribution of 45 items in the adapted version of SILL.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Parts</th>
<th>Strategy Categories</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Memory (MEM)</td>
<td>1-9</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Cognitive (COG)</td>
<td>10-21</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Compensation (COM)</td>
<td>22-26</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>Meta-cognitive (META)</td>
<td>27-35</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>Affective (AFF)</td>
<td>36-40</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Social (SOC)</td>
<td>41-45</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Overall</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>45</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is worthwhile to mention that there were differences in the directions between the original and the adapted version of Oxford’s (1990) SILL survey. While the respondents of the original SILL were asked to write their answers as a number in a separate worksheet, the participants in the present study could directly mark their choices on the questionnaire (See Appendix D for the adapted version of SILL).

3.3.3 Interview protocol. As McNamara (1999) pointed out, interview can be applied as a follow-up measure to the informants of the questionnaire to explore more about their answers, standardized open-ended interview was implemented in this research as a qualitative method. This research instrument “seeks to describe and understand the meanings of central themes in the life world of the subject” (Kvale, 1996, p.31). Although the format of standardized open-ended interview does not assist the interviewer with much flexibility, the participants are assuredly addressed exactly the same questions (Lee McKay, 2006). By conducting one-to-one interviews, this data gathering section aimed at exploring insights into the students’ behaviours and
perceptions about English lexical item acquisition. The interview contains eleven open-ended questions addressed in Vietnamese so that the informants, especially the lower English speaking proficient ones, could freely share their own experiences and accounts. Expressly, while the first two questions aimed at exploring basic information about English learning of the students and questions 3, 4, and 11 related to their beliefs about vocabulary acquisition, questions 5 (MEM), 6 (COG), 7 (COM), 8 (META), 9 (AFF) and 10 (SOC) in turn focused on the six types of VLS corresponding with the taxonomy in the adapted SILL survey. (See Appendix E for the English version and Appendix F for the Vietnamese version of the interview questions).

3.4 Data Collection

3.4.1 Research sampling. The participants recruiting process started with informing sixty-one students in four TOEIC® private classes about the research. After explaining the academic benefits that the participants can derive from this study, I asked for their voluntary participation. Fifty-eight students including thirty-one students from two “TOEIC® 450” classes and twenty-seven students from the two “TOEIC® 650” classes decided to be involved in the study. They then came to the classroom at an arranged time to do a sample TOEIC® Listening and Reading test. The scores of the test were utilized to classify the study population’s TOEIC® proficiency into three groups by level, which were up to 400, from 405 to 545, and 550 and over. Precisely, the students whose scores were at least 550 belonged to the higher proficient group, and the lower proficient group included students with the scores of 400 and under. According to the TOEIC® Correlation Table (2016) released by English Testing Service Global, the test takers whose TOEIC® scores are above 550 can understand the main points of daily inputs and compose written texts on regular studying and working matters. They are also able to express their opinions related to familiar topics and give further explanations for their own ideas. On the other hand, the TOEIC® candidates with
the scores under 400 have difficulties attaining the details in spoken exchanges conveying difficult vocabulary or complicated grammatical structures. Also, these low-achieving students can neither comprehend paraphrased factual data nor infer the meaning from reading texts. I decided to exclude the participants with the scores from 405 to 545 because there could be overlap in this range of research data. The results of the sample TOEIC® test said that eighteen students were in the higher proficiency group and nineteen students were in the middle group, while twenty-one students were segregated as students with lower academic achievement. As previously mentioned, only thirty-nine students in the higher and lower proficiency group could continue to participate in the next stage of this research. However, in order to maintain the ideal number of dependent variables for the reliability of the latter statistical test results, three participants from the group of under-achieving students were randomly eliminated. As a result, the number of respondents for quantitative data collection was thirty-six in total with equal amounts of students in each group.

3.4.2 Administering the survey. Thirty-six participants drawn in the previous step were verbally informed to take part in the second stage of the research. Each group of participants was arranged to finish the adapted version of the SILL survey in separate sessions with a specific code on their sheets of questionnaire. Explicitly, while all the surveys for the higher achievers were marked with “HP” (High Proficiency), the low proficient students gave their answers on the sheets with “LP” (Low Proficiency). Because of the ethical considerations, the respondents were asked not to provide their identities in the self-reported questionnaires. All of them were required to give their responses individually related to the VLS they frequently employed in English studying and it took them about 25 - 30 minutes to complete the answer sheets. Fortunately, all the participants provided complete replies to forty-five questions, which meant thirty-six valid surveys were successfully obtained in this quantitative research stage.
3.4.3 Conducting the interview. Four participants in each group were purposefully invited to join in individual semi-structured interviews when the survey administration finished. Unlike for the respondents in the quantitative data collection, there were no specific criteria for recruiting these qualitative information providers. However, the eight participants were selected firstly because they seemed to be fluent speakers in their mother tongue based on the daily interaction between the teacher and the students in classroom. Their positive attitude towards learning English was the additional feature. Expressly, they came to English classes responsibly as they were hardly ever absent from classes and normally did preparation for lessons at home. The eight interviewees individually shared in-depth information of their goals, habits and strategies in learning English vocabulary. Initially, there was an identical set of eleven questions for each student, but some of them answered some more questions depending on their various opinions and explanations. The interviews were conducted in the form of informal conversations in Vietnamese, which significantly encouraged the students to openly discuss their encounters and anecdotes. It took each informant about fifteen or twenty minutes to complete the interview. Their names were also replaced with pseudonyms to ensure the matter of confidentiality in this research. The participants’ words were audio-recorded and transcribed into English by the researcher in order to be used as the qualitative data in this research.

3.5 Analysis Procedure

The data collected from the present study was analysed using both a descriptive and a statistic approach. While SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) version 22 and Microsoft Excel 2016 were utilized to analyse and present the quantitative data, the information gathered by administering standardized open-interviews was interpreted following a cross-case analysing approach. Firstly, the responses collected from the questionnaires were coded into
numerical data. Precisely, the answer of “never or almost never used” regarding each strategy was assigned a score of 1, and “always or almost always used” became a score of 5, with 2, 3, and 4 in between. Secondly, descriptive analysis was taken with the data gained from the questionnaire. The ten most and least VLS frequently used by each group of learners were filtered. Descriptive data of each strategy used with mean, standard deviation (SD) and use range were calculated and represented with tables. The means of each subscale strategies used by each group were compared and illustrated with charts. Thirdly, independent-samples t-tests with eighteen samples for each group were conducted to compare the means of the scores of two groups to portray the differences in tendencies of VLS used by the higher and the lower proficiency students. In the next step, I listened carefully to the complementary information shared during the interview processes to identify key ideas and primary patterns according to the principles of Grounded Theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Specifically, the eight recorded files were grouped according to the proficiency levels of participants. Then, the responses of four students in each group were examined question by question so that I could detect the similarities and differences in their answers. Finally, the data collected from eight interviewees were synthesized and presented following the order of questions in the interview protocol. The combination and collation of survey’s qualitative data and interviews’ recorded data provided a general picture of using VLS among groups of TOEIC® learners in Vietnamese context.
CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

The central purposes of conducting this empirical study were drawing the picture of VLS use of successful and unsuccessful English learners and comparing the VLS of the two groups of Vietnamese participants who were at different levels of TOEIC® scores. This study was designed based on a mixed method framework with the implementation of a self-reported survey in the quantitative phase and follow-up semi-structured interviews for the qualitative data collecting. Therefore, the findings of this study were considered and demonstrated in two separated parts as the outcomes of quantitative and qualitative data analysis. Specifically, in the quantitative data analysis, I inspected the VLS reported via surveys by good and poor English learners and then the correlation between proficiency levels and the VLS use of the target population was discussed based on the results of independent sample t-tests. The findings of descriptive statistics were further explained in the qualitative data analysing section with the information further shared by respondents during the eight semi-structured interviews.

4.1 Quantitative Data Analysis

In this stage, the numerical data obtained from administering the surveys to thirty-six respondents was computed and analysed in accordance with the Oxford’s (1990) LLS taxonomy consisting of memory strategies, cognitive strategies, compensation strategies, meta-cognitive strategies, affective strategies and social strategies. Oxford (1990) interpreted the mean scores replied to strategies as High use of strategy use if they were in the range of 3.5 to 5.0, strategies whose mean scores were from to 2.5 to 3.4 were ranked as Medium use, and the Low use was assigned to items whose mean scores were from 1.0 to 2.4. In addition, while High used strategies were defined as those always or usually applied by students, Medium ranked strategies were
sometimes employed ones, Low ranked items were never or generally not applied by the respondents.

Apart from providing overall characteristics of VLS use of high and low proficiency English learners, descriptive statistical analysis also listed the ten most and least often used VLS of each group of participants. With the assistance of independent sample t-tests, the relationships between language proficiency levels and the students’ strategic use of the VLS were explored.

4.1.1 Overall vocabulary learning strategies. The results of descriptive statistical analysis of the quantitative data acquired from thirty-six VLS questionnaires illustrated that the two groups of TOEIC® learners with two different levels of proficiency utilized the six categories of VLS to various degrees.

Table 6 describes the VLS favoured by eighteen successful students of the TOEIC® classes. As can be seen from the table, the students with higher levels of proficiency employed a medium degree of learning strategies to study English vocabulary with the overall mean score of \( M=3.37 \). Their most preferred strategy was meta-cognitive (\( M=3.68 \)) while affective strategy was least appreciated, exemplified with the mean score of \( M=2.87 \). Along with meta-cognitive strategy, social and compensation strategy were also used with high frequency (\( M=3.61 \) and \( M=3.58 \), respectively). Located at the fourth and the fifth positions in the descending order of mean scores were cognitive and memory strategy. Those two categories of VLS were practiced at medium level of frequency with \( M=3.34 \) and \( M=3.14 \), correspondingly. In addition, it was worthwhile noticing that the standard deviation of social strategy (SD=0.97) was the highest one among the six strategy categories. A salient diversity in the social strategy use within the group of advanced learners could explain this special figure.
Table 6

*Overall strategies used by high proficiency students*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy Category</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Strategy Use Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meta-cognitive</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>3.68</td>
<td>0.57</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>3.61</td>
<td>0.97</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compensation</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>3.58</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>3.34</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memory</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>3.14</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affective</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>2.87</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall Strategies</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>3.37</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. N = the number of sample; SD = Standard Deviation*

Table 7 lists and ranks the categories of learning strategies that unsuccessful students in TOEIC® classes utilized to deal with English lexical items. Generally, the overall mean score of M=3.04 indicated the medium level of strategy use among the group of low achievers. Although compensation strategy was in the third position in Table 6, this type of strategy was most frequently used by the under-achieving students with the mean score of M=3.57. Unlike compensation strategy which was ranked as high use, four other types of strategies were reported to be used with medium levels of frequency including cognitive, memory, meta-cognitive and social strategy with M=3.15, M=3.07, M=3.01, and M=2.96, subsequently. In addition, the poor students revealed low use of affective strategy with M=2.34, which was also the lowest one among the six types of VLS. Similar to the higher proficient group, this group also exhibited the highest degree of variation of social strategy with SD=0.86. This meant that the learning attitudes of students towards acquiring vocabulary socially differed from student to student in the group of under-achieving students.
Table 7

*Overall strategies used by low proficiency students*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy Category</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Strategy Use Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Compensation</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>3.57</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>3.15</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memory</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meta-cognitive</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>3.01</td>
<td>0.56</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>2.96</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affective</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>2.34</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall Strategies</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>3.04</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td></td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* N = the number of sample; SD = Standard Deviation

**4.1.2 Ten most and least frequently used strategies.** Tables 8, 9, 10, and 11 demonstrate ten VLS preferred the most and the least by TOEIC® leaners in high and low proficiency groups. First of all, Table 8 lists ten strategies reportedly used most often by good TOEIC® learners when they study vocabulary. As is shown in the table, all ten items were responded to with high range of use, and five meta-cognitive strategies encompassing item 28 – noticing mistakes, item 31 – organizing studying time, item 30 – aiming at being a good English learner, item 27 and 33 – seeking for opportunities to practice English prevailed over other strategy categories. In addition, saying or writing words several times (item 10 – COG), using substitutions (item 26 - COM), consolidating lessons (item 8 – MEM), asking for help from English speakers (item 44 – SOC), and guessing the meanings of unknown-words (item 22 – COM) were among ten most popularly practiced VLS of good English learners.
Table 8

*Ten most often used strategies by high proficiency students*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st</td>
<td>28 (META)</td>
<td>I notice my English mistakes and use that information to help me do better.</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>1.029</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>10 (COG)</td>
<td>I say or write new English words several times.</td>
<td>3.94</td>
<td>1.305</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>26 (COM)</td>
<td>If I can’t think of an English word, I use a word or phrase that means the same thing.</td>
<td>3.83</td>
<td>1.098</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th</td>
<td>31 (META)</td>
<td>I plan my schedule so I will have enough time to study English.</td>
<td>3.83</td>
<td>.985</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th</td>
<td>30 (META)</td>
<td>I try to find out how to be a better learner of English.</td>
<td>3.83</td>
<td>1.295</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6th</td>
<td>27 (META)</td>
<td>I try to find as many ways as I can to use my English.</td>
<td>3.83</td>
<td>1.043</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7th</td>
<td>8 (MEM)</td>
<td>I review English lessons often.</td>
<td>3.78</td>
<td>1.060</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8th</td>
<td>33 (META)</td>
<td>I look for opportunities to read as much as possible in English.</td>
<td>3.78</td>
<td>.943</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9th</td>
<td>44 (SOC)</td>
<td>I ask for help from English speakers.</td>
<td>3.72</td>
<td>1.127</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10th</td>
<td>22 (COM)</td>
<td>To understand unfamiliar English words, I make guesses.</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>.907</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* SD = Standard Deviation

Ten individual strategies which were least frequently used by the students in the successful group are displayed in Table 9. In contrast to the previous table (Table 8) in which meta-cognitive strategies predominated, there are not any meta-cognitive and social items in this table. On the
other hand, all five affective items associated with managing negative emotions (items 39, 36, 40), and self-encouraging (items 38, 37) during vocabulary learning are included in this table. Four memory strategies consisting of item 4 - memorizing new words with mental image, item 6 – using flashcards, item 7 – acting out the words, item 1 – relating the new and the known knowledge and one cognitive item (item 18 – looking for equivalent word in L1) were also least often applied by higher achievers.

Table 9

Ten least often used strategies by high proficiency students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>45th</td>
<td>39 (AFF)</td>
<td>I notice if I am tense or nervous when I am studying or using English.</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>.767</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44th</td>
<td>04 (MEM)</td>
<td>I remember a new English word by making a mental picture of a situation in which the word might be used.</td>
<td>2.61</td>
<td>1.145</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43rd</td>
<td>06 (MEM)</td>
<td>I use flashcards to remember new English words.</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>1.085</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42nd</td>
<td>36 (AFF)</td>
<td>I try to relax whenever I feel afraid of using English.</td>
<td>2.72</td>
<td>.752</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41st</td>
<td>18 (COG)</td>
<td>I look for words in my own language that are similar to new words in English.</td>
<td>2.78</td>
<td>1.003</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40th</td>
<td>07 (MEM)</td>
<td>I physically act out new English words.</td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>.924</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39th</td>
<td>01 (MEM)</td>
<td>I think of relationships between what I already know and new things I learn in English.</td>
<td>3.06</td>
<td>1.211</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I give myself a reward or treat when I do well in English.  

I talk to someone else about how I feel when I am learning English.  

I encourage myself to speak English even when I am afraid of making a mistake.

---

Note. SD = Standard Deviation

Regarding the group of students who are at low proficiency level, ten strategies that they applied most frequently are portrayed in Table 10. Although students in this group used overall VLS moderately (M=3.04), they employed five strategies with mean scores over 3.5. Those items used at a high level consisted of two compensation strategies: item 22 – guessing the meaning of new lexical items and item 23 – employing gestures for missing words; two cognitive strategies: item 10 – saying or writing new vocabulary repeatedly and item 11 – imitating native speakers’ accent and word choices; and one memory strategy: item 3 – connecting the pronunciation of a word and its image. Along with those five statements, Table 10 included two cognitive items, one compensation item, one meta-cognitive item and one social item, which were all adopted in medium range of use by the group of poor English students.

Table 10

Ten most often used strategies by low proficiency students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st</td>
<td>22 (COM)</td>
<td>To understand unfamiliar English words, I make guesses.</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>.786</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rank</td>
<td>ID</td>
<td>Strategy</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>23 (COM)</td>
<td>When I can’t think of a word during a conversation in English, I use gestures.</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>.840</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>10 (COG)</td>
<td>I say or write new English words several times.</td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>.984</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th</td>
<td>11 (COG)</td>
<td>I try to talk like native English speakers.</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>.786</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I connect the sound of a new English word and an image or picture of the word to help me remember the word.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th</td>
<td>03 (MEM)</td>
<td>I connect the sound of a new English word and an image or picture of the word to help me remember the word.</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>.985</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6th</td>
<td>26 (COM)</td>
<td>If I can’t think of an English word, I use a word or phrase that means the same thing.</td>
<td>3.44</td>
<td>.984</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7th</td>
<td>31 (META)</td>
<td>I plan my schedule so I will have enough time to study English.</td>
<td>3.39</td>
<td>1.195</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8th</td>
<td>18 (COG)</td>
<td>I look for words in my own language that are similar to new words in English.</td>
<td>3.39</td>
<td>.916</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9th</td>
<td>41 (SOC)</td>
<td>If I do not understand something in English, I ask the other person to slow down or to say it again.</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>1.283</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10th</td>
<td>20 (COG)</td>
<td>I find the meaning of an English word by dividing it into parts that I understand.</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>1.138</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* SD = Standard Deviation

Table 11 presents ten items which were least preferred strategies among unsuccessful students. Similar to the dominance of affective strategies in Table 9, all the five affective items were listed in this table. Along with four affective strategies (item 37, 38, 36, and 39) and one meta-cognitive strategy (item 32) reportedly used in low range of frequency, the series of ten least often used strategies of the under-achieving students also covered five other items employed
moderately including two cognitive strategies (item 14, 17), one meta-cognitive strategy (item 29),
one affective strategy (item 40) and one social strategy (item 45).

Table 11

*Ten least often used strategies by low proficiency students*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>45th</td>
<td>37 (AFF)</td>
<td>I encourage myself to speak English even when I am afraid of making a mistake.</td>
<td>2.28</td>
<td>1.074</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44th</td>
<td>38 (AFF)</td>
<td>I give myself a reward or treat when I do well in English.</td>
<td>2.28</td>
<td>.669</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43rd</td>
<td>36 (AFF)</td>
<td>I try to relax whenever I feel afraid of using English.</td>
<td>2.28</td>
<td>1.018</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42nd</td>
<td>39 (AFF)</td>
<td>I notice if I am tense or nervous when I am studying or using English.</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>.907</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41st</td>
<td>32 (META)</td>
<td>I look for people I can talk to in English.</td>
<td>2.44</td>
<td>.922</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40th</td>
<td>14 (COG)</td>
<td>I start conversations in English.</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>1.505</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39th</td>
<td>17 (COG)</td>
<td>I write notes, messages, letters, or reports in English.</td>
<td>2.56</td>
<td>1.294</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38th</td>
<td>29 (META)</td>
<td>I pay attention when someone is speaking English.</td>
<td>2.56</td>
<td>.984</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37th</td>
<td>40 (AFF)</td>
<td>I talk to someone else about how I feel when I am learning English.</td>
<td>2.56</td>
<td>.984</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36th</td>
<td>45 (SOC)</td>
<td>I ask questions in English.</td>
<td>2.61</td>
<td>1.243</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. SD = Standard Deviation*
4.1.3 Comparison of vocabulary learning strategies used by the two groups. The VLS used by high and low proficiency groups are compared in seven figures (Figure 1 through Figure 7) and Table 12.

**Figure 1. Overall strategies used by high and low proficiency students**

Figure 1 compares the mean scores of overall strategies used by students in high and low proficiency groups. From the chart it is obvious that the learners with higher proficiency level responded to the survey with higher mean scores in all the six types of VLS than the lower achievers did. To put it in another way, the successful students employed all strategy categories more often than the learners in the unsuccessful group did. Moreover, while the disproportions between the mean scores of the two groups related to direct language learning strategies were hard to recognize, those in the cases of indirect ones were considerable. Expressly, the differences between the strategy use of the two groups were insubstantial when it comes to memory, cognitive
and compensation strategy, whereas the students in the higher proficiency group applied remarkably more meta-cognitive, affective, and social strategies than their peers in the lower one.

![Image: Memory strategies used by high and low proficiency students](image)

**Figure 2.** Memory strategies used by high and low proficiency students

Individual strategies of memory category applied by two groups of students are illustrated in Figure 2. According to the chart, the mean scores of memory strategies used by successful English learners were higher than those of their unsuccessful peers in item 2, 5, 8, 9 while the poor achievers reported that they used strategy 1, 3, 4, 6, 7 more frequently than the good ones. Item 8 - *I review English lessons often* (M=3.78) and item 3 - *I connect the sound of a new English word and an image or picture of the word to help me remember the word* (M=3.50) were the most preferred memory strategies by high and low proficiency groups respectively. On the other hand, the better students least often used strategy 4 (M=2.61) – *I remember a new English word by making a mental picture of a situation in which the word might be used* to memorize English.
lexical items, and item 2 – *I use new English words in a sentence so I can remember them* (M=2.78) was the least favored memory strategy among the population of poor students.

![Figure 3. Cognitive strategies used by high and low proficiency students](image)

As can be seen from Figure 3, eight of twelve cognitive strategies including item 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 17, 19 and 21 were more popular among the higher proficiency group than the lower one, which corresponded with the higher average mean score of cognitive strategies of the good students (M=3.34) compared to that of the poor ones (M=3.15). Among the twelve cognitive strategies, both good and poor groups of learners most preferred strategy 10 - *I say or write new English words several times* the most (M=3.94 and M=3.56, proportionately) when they use their mental processes to study English vocabulary. The cognitive strategy 18 – *I look for words in my own language that are similar to new words in English* (M=2.78) and strategy 14 – *I start conversations in English* (M=2.50) were least often adopted among the two groups of high and low academic achievers respectively.
Figure 4. Compensation strategies used by high and low proficiency students

As compensation strategy was at the highest position in the ranking list of strategy categories of low proficient students, the average mean scores of the answers to compensation items of the high and low proficiency groups were approximately the same (M=3.58 and M=3.57, proportionately). Figure 4 discloses that while item 22 and 23 were employed more often by unsuccessful students, item 24, 25, and 26 were, in contrast, more popular among their successful peers. Item 26 – *If I can’t think of an English word, I use a word or phrase that means the same thing* (M=3.83) and item 22 – *To understand unfamiliar English words, I make guesses* (M=4.17) were respectively the most preferred strategies that good students and poor students employed to compensate for their missing knowledge of lexicon. Item 24 – *I make up new words if I do not know the right ones in English* was the least favoured compensation strategies among both groups with M=3.44 for the higher achievers and M=3.06 for the lower ones.
Figure 5. Meta-cognitive strategies used by high and low proficiency students

Regarding the items measuring the use of meta-cognitive strategies, that this type of VLS was the most preferred strategy category among successful students accounts for their predominance in mean scores throughout the nine meta-cognitive items. Figure 5 reveals that item 28 - I notice my English mistakes and use that information to help me do better (M=4.00) and item 35 - I think about my progress in learning English (M=3.39) was correspondingly most and least often applied by good students for organizing and evaluating their vocabulary learning. In addition, the most and the least often selected meta-cognitive strategies of the poor students were item 31 – I plan my schedule so I will have enough time to study English and item 32 – I look for people I can talk to in English with M=3.39 and M=2.44, subsequently.
Figure 6. Affective strategies used by high and low proficiency students

As far as the use of affective strategies is concerned, Figure 6 reports that there were no affective strategies which were more popular among the lower proficient participants compared to the higher ones. Specifically, the group of successful students employed strategies 36, 37, 38, and 40 more often than their unsuccessful friends and the levels of use were the same in cases of item 39. As it is shown in Figure 6, item 37 - I encourage myself to speak English even when I am afraid of making a mistake and item 40 - I talk to someone else about how I feel when I am learning English were equally responded with the highest mean scores (M=3.11) by the good students while they least preferred item 39 – I notice if I am tense or nervous when I am studying or using English (M=2.33). Regarding the group of poor students, item 40 - I talk to someone else about how I feel when I am learning English was most popular among them, whereas strategy 36 – I try to relax whenever I feel afraid of using English, strategy 37 – I encourage myself to speak English even when I am afraid of making a mistake, and strategy 38 - I give myself a reward or treat when I do
well in English were the three affective strategies (M=2.28) that they least often employed to manage their emotions during their English vocabulary acquisition.

![Figure 7. Social strategies used by high and low proficiency students](image)

The answers of the participants to the items related to social strategy display a similar pattern with those to the meta-cognitive strategy, which means that the successful students utilized all social strategies with higher range of use than their unsuccessful peers did. Figure 7 demonstrates a relatively equality of preference among five social strategies of the high proficiency group with the highest mean score M=3.72 for item 44 – *I ask for help from English speakers* and the lowest one M=3.56 for item 42 - *I ask English speakers to correct me when I talk*, item 45 - *I ask questions in English*. For the lower achievers, item 41 – *If I do not understand something in English, I ask the other person to slow down or to say it again* (M=3.33) was reported with highest range of use while item 45 – *I ask questions in English* (M=2.61) was their least favored social strategy when they thought about learning English vocabulary with others.
In order to find out whether there are significant differences in the strategy use between the higher and the lower achievers, independent sample t-tests were performed with the mean scores responding to each strategy category and to the overall strategies. The results gained from seven independent sample t-tests are described in Table 12. The results of the final t-test revealed a statistically significant difference in overall strategy use between successful and unsuccessful students ($p = .001$). It is further demonstrated that the difference was significant for three strategy categories: meta-cognitive strategies ($p = .001$), affective strategies ($p = .006$), and social strategies ($p = .039$). These three types of indirect strategies were utilized significantly more often by the students in the high proficiency group than their peers in the low proficiency group.

Table 12

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy Categories</th>
<th>High Proficiency</th>
<th>Low Proficiency</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>*p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memory Strategies</td>
<td>3.14</td>
<td>.63</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive Strategies</td>
<td>3.34</td>
<td>.58</td>
<td>3.15</td>
<td>.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compensation Strategies</td>
<td>3.58</td>
<td>.73</td>
<td>3.57</td>
<td>.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meta-cognitive Strategies</td>
<td>3.68</td>
<td>.57</td>
<td>3.01</td>
<td>.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affective Strategies</td>
<td>2.87</td>
<td>.34</td>
<td>2.34</td>
<td>.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Strategies</td>
<td>3.61</td>
<td>.97</td>
<td>2.96</td>
<td>.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall Strategies</td>
<td>3.37</td>
<td>.29</td>
<td>3.04</td>
<td>.26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. M = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation; *p < .05.*
4.2 Qualitative Data Analysis

With the primary aim to obtain further explanation for the statistical findings explored from the closed-ended survey, the qualitative data collection of this study was carried out. In this follow-up phase, eight informants were expected to discuss their beliefs, their experiences and their difficulties as well regarding to English vocabulary learning. In addition, some factors influencing their preferences of VLS were also uncovered through 11 semi-structured interview questions directly focusing on English vocabulary studying. Similar to the quantitative data acquired from the adapted SILL survey, the qualitative data was also analysed within the framework of Oxford (1990). To be more precise, five items exploring the interviewees’ perceptions of vocabulary learning were accompanied by six questions based on the Oxford’s (1990) LLS classification including memory, cognitive, compensation, meta-cognitive, affective and social strategy. In order to comprehend the analysis of the data set more thoroughly, the demographic information of the group of eight interviewees is summarized in Table 13 below. These personal data were elicited at the beginning of each interview as a measure to reduce the informants’ anxiety. The TOEIC® scores displayed in the last column in descending order were the scores they achieved in the sample test integrated in the procedure of this research.

Table 13

Demographic information of interviewees (N=8)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proficiency Level</th>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Academic Level</th>
<th>Major</th>
<th>TOEIC® scores</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>Hang</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Undergraduate</td>
<td>International Economics</td>
<td>650</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level</td>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Status</td>
<td>Major</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>Luong</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>Computer Science</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>Gia</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Undergraduate</td>
<td>Business Administration</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>Vinh</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>Medicine</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Chi</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Postgraduate</td>
<td>Software Technology</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Tu</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Undergraduate</td>
<td>Accounting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Nhi</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Undergraduate</td>
<td>Commercial</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Ngan</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>Analytic Chemistry</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.2.1 The high proficiency group. Four interviewees at the high language proficiency level including Hang, Luong, Gia and Vinh openly gave extra information about their attitudes and strategies in learning English vocabulary. Firstly, when being questioned about their motivation in studying English, all the informants revealed that their fundamental purpose of attending English class was the TOEIC® certificate as a requirement for graduation from university (Hang and Gia) or for their qualification at the workplace (Luong and Vinh). However, they were fully aware of the benefits of English knowledge in daily aspects such as potential studying and working opportunities in the future (Hang and Gia) and researching specialized knowledge (Vinh). Particularly, Luong emphasized that coming to English class frequently was one of his approaches to revise his English knowledge and maintain his English language ability. Regarding their opportunities to utilize English in daily life, the group of four students reported various occasions
in which they can practice English. Expressly, apart from using English in some courses at school, Hang participated in some exchange programmes with other young English-native speakers at her university while Gia had some foreign friends and she also was the member of some English-learning clubs. For the two graduates, while Luong usually used English in training courses and e-mails communicating at his workplace, Vinh did not have many chances to practice English at the hospital except working with international apprentices. No matter how important the role of English in individuals’ lives, they strongly agreed with the idea that English vocabulary was certainly crucial to English learning, especially in communicative skills. Luong, Gia, and Vinh explained that the insufficiency in lexical knowledge prevented English learners from expressing exactly their ideas in English communication. Hang believed, “In some cases, even when we cannot articulate perfect sentences, we still can survive in conversations with foreigners with a certain number of lexical items”. Next, the four interviewees unanimously defined “knowing an English word” as not only comprehending the primary meaning, the spelling and the pronunciation of that word but also knowing how to use the word contextually. In addition, synonyms, collocations, word families and grammatical forms of the target word were also factors listed in Hang, Gia and Vinh’s belief about a familiar word while Luong declared his specific opinion like this: “If I can communicate comprehensively and I got mutual understanding with the others when using that word, I think I know it.”

When being asked the questions related to their own VLS, the subgroup of high proficient students revealed some interesting strategies. Firstly, their direct vocabulary learning strategies including memory, cognitive and compensation were explored via questions 5, 6 and 7. Explicitly, in order to memorize the new words, the two male respondents admitted using a traditional approach in which the target words were written several times accompanied by the example
sentences. Hang would highlight the new words first, then list them with meanings and some relevant linguistic elements such as word families and pronunciation on a sheet of paper and finally scrutinize the words in a couple of times. Gia chose to examine the words closely, related the pronunciation of each syllable with its spelling and made up example sentences until she could retain the target words. Along with participating in their current TOEIC® classes, Hang and Vinh undertook series of activities encompassing watching English-speaking movies with Vietnamese subtitles, listening to English music with lyrics, and reading specialist books in English to expand their English lexicon. Particularly, Vinh, who most actively sought for opportunities to explore more English lexis, also sang English songs and played mobile games with English vocabulary e-flashcards. To the same question, Luong answered that he employed CNN, CNBC and English newspapers as channels to enrich his English vocabulary knowledge while Gia did extra reading with academic documents and self-studied more at home with some vocabulary books. The compensation strategies were reported with quite similar pattern among the four participants. To be more precise, if they encountered an unfamiliar word while dealing with an English reading text, first they guessed the meaning of the word as an instinctive reflex based on the content of the paragraph, the topic sentence and the context of use of the word, then they utilized a dictionary to find out the exact meaning of the new word. While Vinh combined bilingual and monolingual dictionaries, the others preferred English – English dictionary because it further provided them with some extra synonymous items, example bank and the English definition of the word. After checking out the meaning of the new word, they kept it in their wordlists so that they could learn and consolidate it later. In case of not being able to think of a word while speaking or writing in English, they would use a synonym, explain their ideas differently with some simpler words or try to give the definition of the unknown words. “In the case I want to mention ‘the sink’ but I can’t
retain the word exactly, I will describe the position and the function of it so that the listener can understand what I mean”, Gia shared.

The next three questions asked about the target group’s indirect vocabulary learning strategies which were meta-cognitive, affective and social strategies. Responding to the question asking them to evaluate the effectiveness of their English vocabulary studying, Hang and Luong self-assessed themselves as effective English vocabulary learners for different reasons. Specifically, Hang thought that her interest in learning English positively contributed to her English vocabulary acquisition and Luong was confident with his actual ability to communicate in English. However, Vinh did not think that he had studied English vocabulary productively as he recognized that he sometimes could not keep some complicated or formal words in his mind. Gia displayed her uncertainty, “It probably depends on people’s viewpoints. I myself have no idea whether I’m an effective vocabulary learner or not, but now I think the strategy I’ve been applying is the best one for me. I’ll try to explore more appropriate VLS to enhance the effectiveness of my English studying in the future.” As far as the notion of vocabulary consolidation was concerned, the four good students reported some of their different activities such as doing homework and listening to audio files of the textbook frequently (Hang and Vinh), revising the example sentences in personal vocabulary handbook (Vinh and Gia), doing vocabulary quizzes on mobile device (Vinh), and reviewing the wordlist periodically (Luong and Gia). Finding it hard to remember jargon, academic words, formal words, homonyms, less frequently used words, difficult to pronounce words, and words with Latin or French origin was mentioned when they were asked to share their difficulties in learning English vocabulary. As a result, paying more attention to and spending much more time on studying and consolidating those kinds of lexical items were their common strategies to overcome the obstacles. No matter how much they enjoyed studying English,
they admitted that they used to more or less feel frustrated in learning English vocabulary; however, the ability to comprehensively enjoy English-speaking films and English music (Hang), acquiring the knowledge conveyed English specialist materials (Vinh), and the obvious benefits of knowing English in daily life (Gia and Luong) were integrative motivations encouraging them to try more and more. In addition, while Gia and the two males disclosed their preferences of studying English vocabulary by their own because of the better concentration, Hang appreciated the role of peers as she could upgrade her communicative skills and her lexical items at the same time. Luong added that although he usually studied vocabulary by speaking out the words and the example sentences in front of a mirror, he sometimes had his foreign colleagues correct his pronunciation or word choices.

Finally, as Hang had witnessed her friends’ failure in acquiring English vocabulary owing to the lack of appropriate VLS and Gia believed that an EFL teacher could help her correct language mistakes and the combination of self-studying and teacher’s guidance would assuredly accelerate her English vocabulary learning progress, they comprehended the significance of EFL teachers’ instructing VLS to English learners. Both Hang and Vinh agreed that English learners could save more time, get access to English more easily and productively with the assistance EFL teachers in VLS training while Luong thought that the English learners could choose to adapt the VLS from the teacher suggestions to their own habits, interests and language learning styles.

4.2.2 The low proficiency group. Four under-achieving TOEIC® learners who were Chi, Tu, Nhi, and Ngan shared what they thought about English acquisition, and what strategies they employed or what difficulties they encountered when studying English lexicon. Irrespective of being full-time students (Tu and Nhi) or workers in companies (Chi and Ngan), their primary objective of studying English was the TOEIC® certificate and the secondary one was a prosperous
career (Tu, Nhi, and Ngan) and the demand of communicating in English at working place (Chi). Generally, they seldom had opportunities to practice English at school or at work except Chi, who had to write business emails in English as he was working for a multinational. Tu further revealed that she had a few chances to interact with international tourists, but she was not confident to actively start conversations. Similarly, the confession of Nhi disclosed that she hardly ever volunteered in her English classes at university owing to lack of self-confidence in her English ability. In total agreement with their higher proficient peers, these four students affirmed the significance of vocabulary in English language learning. They believed that the demonstration of both literacy and communicative skills would be considerably limited with inadequate English vocabulary knowledge. In addition, Chi recognized that it was really hard for him to communicate effectively with English-speakers if he pronounced the words incorrectly. When being asked to define what it means to know an English word, they commonly replied with knowing the meanings, the pronunciation, the collocations and the use of the target word. Additionally, being able to identify the stressed syllable and extra meanings of the word (Ngan), to comprehend the word in different contexts and to use the word flexibly in multi contexts (Chi) were also emphasized in their perspectives of “knowing an English word”. To illustrate the flexibility of using words, Chi gave an example, “To substitute for ‘write an e-mail’, I can use ‘leave a message’, instead”.

Memory, cognition and compensation, the three direct categories of vocabulary learning strategies were applied variously among the subgroup of low achievers. Firstly, writing down the target word several times along with pronouncing it repeatedly was popular among the four respondents when they wanted to memorize a new word. In addition, Tu usually stuck post-it notes with the complicated words on the walls of her bedroom. Also, they employed various ways to explore more English lexical items outside the classroom. For instance, Tu sang English songs and
watched English-speaking movies with the assistance of Vietnamese subtitles while Nhi attended English clubs at her university and read short news in English. Ngan preferred reading English comics and short stories on the Internet and watching English films whereas Chi followed some favorite YouTube channels combined with reading articles with familiar topics on English newspapers. Moreover, they used strategies identical with those of the good students when encountering an unfamiliar word in an English reading text as they first automatically guessed the meaning of the word and then used dictionaries as a measure to deal with the hard word. However, these poor students appreciated bilingual dictionaries rather than the monolingual ones as they found that they could understand the meaning of the word exactly only if the definition was in Vietnamese. Also, if they had difficulty brainstorming a word while speaking or writing in English, using substitutes or even gestures (Tu and Nhi) were their strategies. Ngan gave an example, “When I think about the word ‘explore’ but I don’t know it, I can say ‘get to know’ or ‘search for’, instead.”

In respect to the indirect category, the group of low-achieving students informatively shared some of the meta-cognitive, affective and social strategies they utilized to study English lexical items. When self-evaluating their English vocabulary learning, none of them considered themselves effective vocabulary learners because they all suffered difficulties remembering words in long term, especially the multi-syllable words (Tu and Ngan). They sometimes encountered a word seemed to be familiar, but they failed to recall the meaning (Chi and Nhi) or mixed up the order of letters within a word (Nhi). Ngan and Chi confessed that they did not review vocabulary lessons at home frequently, and the procedure of vocabulary consolidation of this group was similar to the process of memorizing a new word in which they rewrote the word many times. Ngan said, “For some hard-to-retained words, I write them on memo stickers and put them on the
bedhead or the wall where I often unintentionally look at.” Although Tu and Nhi were the two students reporting a positive frequency of reviewing lessons at home, they found it difficult to mentally maintain the spelling and the pronunciation of complicated words. By the same token, Chi also had troubles pronouncing a word correctly, especially when it was embedded in a sentence. In addition, polysemous words sometimes confused him while trying to comprehend what people meant and he needed more chances to practice English to experience more meanings of a certain word. The obstacles previously mentioned considerably discouraged the poor English learners; however, each of them had their own ways to overcome the adversity. The most optimistic one was Tu, who thought about how bright her future and how confident she would be if she could use English fluently. Tu and Nhi also shared their frustrating feelings with sister and friends as a measure to release their stress. While Nhi and Ngan would temporarily give up and then return to study English vocabulary at a different time, Chi decided to ignore the hard-spelling words and focus more on the simple ones. About the notion of cooperating with other people in learning English vocabulary, Tu, Nhi and Chi found that they would better concentrate when working alone as interacting with peers was more suitable for practicing speaking skill in their perspective. “While working with friends, they surely remind me whenever I forget a word; as a result, I gradually depend on them and cannot recall the word by myself”, Tu explained. Contrarily, Ngan displayed her preference with the collaboration of her roommate in a game of “translating between the two languages” when she studied English lexicon as she realized that the new words she got from her peers seemed to be accumulated into her mind more efficiently.

When the last question was addressed, there was an agreement among the four interviewees regarding the strategic necessity of VLS instructed by EFL teachers. They asserted that Vietnamese students had not succeeded in identifying the best approach for themselves to acquire
the foreign lexical items rapidly and effectively; therefore, the EFL teachers, with their advanced
experiences, should introduce some strategies to enhance the English vocabulary learning among
the learners. Nevertheless, Ngan asserted the key component of successful vocabulary learning
was the interest and the determination inside the language learners themselves. Stated differently,
if the learners were not motivated by the desire to enlarge their vocabulary knowledge, the valuable
instructions from their teachers would not prove any potency.
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

5.1 Summary of Research Findings

The presentation of quantitative statistics in tables and charts and the analysis of qualitative data through transcripts in this study can be summarized as follows.

First of all, the information obtained by administering the adapted version of SILL questionnaires to thirty-six respondents disclosed that both groups of participants employed VLS to study English vocabulary with moderate range of use in general. Specifically, advanced learners surpassed their lower proficient peers in making use of all six categories of VLS. The better-achieving learners always or usually used meta-cognitive, social and compensation strategies while cognitive, memory and affective strategies were reported in medium use range. The under-achieving students exploited all the categories of VLS in sometimes-use range except the compensation and affective strategy, which were ranked as high and low range of use respectively. It was worth mentioning that meta-cognitive and compensation strategy were most preferred among high and low proficiency group respectively while the affective strategy was least popular to participants in both groups.

Next, the results of independent sample t-tests illustrated significant differences in the use of the indirect strategy category, which contributed to the overall difference in VLS use between good and poor English learners. Expressly, successful English learners practiced more variety of VLS in more situations and with higher frequency than the students at the elementary level did, typically in meta-cognitive, affective and social strategies.

Finally, the interviews with the subgroup of the research population provided further information about the perspectives and habits of using VLS of good and poor English learners. There were some common features in the responses of the eight informants, such as their
dominantly instrumental motivation of learning English, their beliefs about the significance of lexical items in language learning, the mnemonic strategies they used to memorize new words and what they did to compensate for missing vocabulary knowledge. They also shared similarities in the difficulties they encountered during English vocabulary acquisition and their viewpoints associated with the role of EFL teachers in instructing VLS to English learners. Nevertheless, the two groups characterized their discrepancies in some other features of foreign language learning. Outstandingly, the good students seemed to be more active in seeking for opportunities to practice English in their daily life, which resulted in more chances to experience the target language and more confidence to start conversations with English speakers. Additionally, while the bilingual dictionary was more popular among under-achieving students, all the four better ones highly appreciated the monolingual dictionary in exploring not only the meanings but also other linguistic features of the unknown words. Last but not least, more students in the high proficiency group were confidently self-evaluated themselves as effective vocabulary learners and reported various productive activities to consolidate their knowledge of English lexical items. The next section will further discuss the results of this study based on the theoretical background and some empirical research.

5.2 Discussion of Research Findings

The current study was conducted in the English teaching and learning setting with the primary purpose to provide a better understanding of the VLS employed by Vietnamese EFL learners with different levels of academic achievement. The quantitative data measured with the Likert-scale survey revealed that the VLS use of both high and low proficiency groups were in medium range with M=3.37 and M=3.04, respectively. As a result, the holistic strategy use was moderate, which was consistent with the findings of some such previous projects on EFL
participants as Hong-Nam and Leavell (2006), Nguyen and Godwyll (2010), Salahshour et al. (2013), Huang (2015), and Ali and Paramasivam (2016). This medium level strategy use is understandable given that English is a foreign language in the context of Vietnam rather than a second language, which means that Vietnamese students are not required to study English as a key instrument to survive in daily communication. Therefore, not only the opportunities but also the intrinsic motivations for Vietnamese-speaking learners to actively expose themselves to English communicating environments are limited. Despite the same medium use range of VLS among the two groups of participants, I witnessed the outperformance of advanced students in the intensity of using all six categories of VLS included in the adapted SILL questionnaire compared to the lower achieving learners. This finding showed compatibility with those of existing studies (Lee, 2001; Gerami & Baighlou, 2011; Ali & Paramasivam, 2016), which asserted that the higher proficient language learners employed learning strategies more frequently and appropriately than the students at the lower level of proficiency did.

In this research, not only the degrees of VLS implementation of the research participants were uncovered, but to what extent the proficiency level influences the VLS use of the target population was also examined. The results of independent sample t-tests illustrated statistically significant differences between the two groups of high and low achieving English learners in adopting VLS, favoring to the more proficient one. This finding supported to the conclusions of earlier researchers such as Green and Oxford (1995), Wharton (2000), Cho and Ahn (2003), Hong-Nam and Leavell (2006), Magogwe and Oliver (2007), Lai (2009), Al-Buainain (2010), Simsek and Balaban (2010), Yilmaz (2010), Salahshour et al. (2013), and Ali and Paramasivam (2016). However, the results of the present study differed from the conclusions of Shmais (2003) and Salem (2006), who also employed Oxford’s (1990) SILL as research instrument, asserted that
language proficiency did not play significant role in the adoption of learning strategies among the EFL learners in Palestine and Lebanon.

Regarding to the differences between direct and indirect strategies in the relationship with the language proficiency, while there were positive correlations between the proficiency level with the use of indirect strategies, there were no statistically significant differences in the use of memory, cognitive and compensation strategies between the higher and the lower achieving students. The similarities found in the use of memory, cognitive and compensation strategies were confirmed by the explanatory data collected through follow-up interviews. Expressly, most of the interviewees from the two groups confessed that they wrote down the target words several times in notebooks to memorize them and enjoyed films and music in English as beneficial means to enhance vocabulary knowledge. All the eight students instinctively made guesses with unfamiliar lexical items in reading texts and relied on synonyms or substitutes to express ideas when they had trouble brainstorming appropriate words while communicating in English. Feasible explanation for this case is the homogeneity of the research population in terms of their cultural backgrounds, language studying environment, learning objectives and instructional input. Precisely, all the participants’ mother tongue was Vietnamese and they were drawn from students in TOEIC® classes which were taught by the same teacher. Another possibility is that the target population might apply other sets of direct strategies which were not measured in the survey. For example, highlighting and writing down the target words accompanied by parts of speech, pronunciations, making up example sentences or scrutinizing the words closely were among the memory strategies that the interviewees used to study new English vocabulary. Similarly, listening to English music and singing English songs cognitively practiced by students were only explored during interviews.
As far as the use of vocabulary learning strategies of specific strategy category was considered, differences and similarities in the preferences of VLS between high and low proficient students were detected. Successful learners in the current study practiced meta-cognitive strategies with the highest frequency (M=3.68), which was in line with the reports of Oh (1996), Sheorey (1999), Magogwe and Oliver (2007), Simsek and Balaban (2010), Lai (2009), Nguyen and Godwyll (2010), Gerami and Baighlou (2011), Salahshour et al. (2013), and Ali and Paramasivam (2016). This phenomenon can be reasoned by the opinion of Oxford (1990) and Chamot (2004) who believed in the significance of meta-cognitive learning strategy in the success of language acquisition. By the same token, Cohen (2011) reaffirmed that higher proficiency in the target language is among the requirements of effective applying meta-cognitive learning strategies. With the meta-cognitive approach, the language learners consider the organisation and the evaluation of both the process and the progress of their language learning more carefully. Practicing this type of VLS frequently assists those successful learners with reasonable learning plans and wise studying decisions. Their clearly defined purposes of taking part in English classes; their concerns associated with the learning improvement; and their endless effort to look for English practice environment significantly contribute to their advanced learning outcomes.

The first position of the meta-cognitive strategy in the priority of using VLS among good students in the current study was immediately followed by social strategy with M=3.60. This finding means that the high achievers were willing to raise questions for language clarification or correction from other English-users and cooperate with partners while learning English vocabulary as well. They also tried to understand what other English-speakers believe and empathize with them based on the cultural comprehension. Nevertheless, the finding about the first and second most often used meta-cognitive and social strategies among successful students in this project
contradicted the conclusions of Politzer and McGroarty (1985) and O’Malley and Chamot (1990) who argued that the interactive learning approach was not popular among Asian foreign language learners and they displayed high tendency to use the rote mnemonic strategy owing to the traditional language teaching method and the curricula emphasizes.

Different from the group of good students, the lower proficient learners responded to the questionnaire with the compensation strategy as their most often used VLS. Their low level of academic achievement which results from lack of proper lexical items and grammatical structures is the only plausible interpretation for this VLS priority. “Less proficient language learners need these compensatory production strategies even more, because they run into knowledge roadblocks more often than do individuals who are skilled in the language” (Oxford, 1990, p. 49). The insufficiency in lexical items causes more situations in which they are forced to guess the meaning of unfamiliar words and to rely on circumlocution, synonyms or even mime and gesture to express their ideas. Some poor students unintentionally switch to their mother tongue or coin new words as instinctive reactions when getting stuck in retaining or brainstorming appropriate words.

In spite of the obvious discrepancies in the most preferred VLS, both groups of participants illustrated their lack of interest in affective strategies. Some earlier studies also found that their EFL or ESL research subjects hesitantly replied to this category of VLS (Hong-Nam & Leavell, 2006; Nguyen & Godwyll, 2010; Yang, 2010; Yilmaz, 2010; Gerami & Baighlou, 2011; Huang, 2015; and Ali & Paramasivam, 2016). The opinion of Rao (2006) who commented that Korean and Japanese in particular and Asian English-learners in general are quite reserved and reticent about their emotions and their thoughts in English classrooms can be applicable to clarify this case. Yang (2010) showed his agreement with Rao when he reported that the Korean participants in his
study were not fully instructed how to deal with their negative feelings unashamedly and effectively when they encountered obstacles in studying language.

In light of the social strategy which was the second most common strategy of good students and the second least popular strategy in the population of the lower achievers, there emerged an interesting feature which was worthy to note. The levels of variation in the use of this strategy category in both groups were not only quite high and but also the highest ones compared to other standard variation values of the two groups, with SD = 0.97 for the successful students and SD = 0.86 for the unsuccessful ones. These figures can be explained by the intervene of individual differences of the language learners. The first factor is the learners’ personalities as students who are sociable, outgoing or extrovert may prefer improving their English knowledge by interacting with other people. They will put aside their reluctance to openly ask for assistance from native English speakers or their successful English learning friends in verifying their English. Another factor is whether the participants get adequate opportunities or not to practice English communicative skills in their studying, working and living environment.
CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

6.1 Research Conclusion

This research initially set out to investigate and compare the English vocabulary learning strategies of Vietnamese adult learners at two different levels of proficiency. The study results successfully yielded insights into the overall reported VLS applied by high and low proficiency students in TOEIC® classes. The findings provided the EFL teachers and English curriculum designers with thorough understanding of the tendency and the variety of VLS employed by their language students. In general, it was uncovered that both the successful and unsuccessful TOEIC® learners recruited in this project employed strategies to study vocabulary at moderate level. Additionally, the more proficient the students were, the more frequent and diversified their VLS use was and this outperformance was also detected in all six subcategories of strategy. Meta-cognitive strategies were the most popular strategies employed by the good students while compensation ones were the top priority of the under-achieving learners. In addition, the affective strategy was reported as the least favoured learning strategy category among both groups of the research population. The results of independent sample t-tests also revealed that the proficiency level remarkably influenced the overall VLS employed by the target research participants. The discrepancy was attributed to the statistically significant differences in implementing VLS between the advanced and the elementary students on the three indirect categories, namely meta-cognitive, affective and social strategy. Through qualitative data analysis, I also found a strong relationship between the advanced English scores of good students and their preferences of monolingual dictionary and frequency of exposure to English speaking settings as well. Moreover, available entertaining sources of English such as movies, music, audio and video news channels proved beneficial on not only the enjoyment but also the favourable outcomes of studying English.
6.2 Pedagogical Implications

In the context of Vietnam where English has been emphasized as the key factor in catching up with the trend of integration and globalisation, learning strategies training in the domain of foreign language education should be expanded. VLS play a significant role as a practical measure to assist the foreign language learners, especially the under achievers to autonomously manage and consolidate their language studying. Moreover, the Vietnamese-speaking English learners are essentially encouraged to develop self-regulation and discover new learning strategies. Actively looking for exposure to authentic inputs in the target language speaking communities strikingly accelerates their language acquisition process. There is a strong possibility that they may find some new useful solutions after trying the approaches they have rarely or never applied before as each learning strategy profits different users in different ways and yields different degrees of effectiveness. It is also imperative that both the material authors and the language curriculum designers consider introducing VLS as an integrated section while developing new language textbooks or planning academic curricula. To be more precise, as meta-cognitive strategy prove its contribution to the academic achievement of successful students, it is better for the syllabi and English course books to be mainly meta-cognitive based. Providing the learners with opportunities to set their learning goals and manage their studying progress are among what an effective English training program designer should take into consideration. Additionally, allocating extra hours of language educating program on teaching learning strategies for English learners is among constructive suggestions. During those embedded training courses, the students are not only familiarized with LLS, but they also have opportunities to apply such strategies through practical learning tasks and activities. It is also a superior idea for EFL teachers to study their teaching context, especially the learner’s differences with the assistance of short surveys, covert
observations, or informal interviews. A thorough comprehending of the students’ characteristics, interests, habits, motivation, anxiety, beliefs, and learning styles, etc., correctly guides the teachers to introduce proper sets of VLS to their language students.

Nevertheless, no matter how diversified and intensive the VLS use of the language learners is, the key aspect contributing to the academic achievement of a successful language learner is the appropriateness of strategies applying (Vann & Abraham, 1990). With the aim of achieving the best advantages of practicing a specific VLS, language learner variables such as age, gender, aptitude, personality, cognitive style, proficiency level and cultural background, etc. should be considered conscientiously. As there is no strategy that is effective for all learners (Rubin, 1975), certain strategies dominantly benefit young language learners rather than adults while others are better for learners at a higher level of proficiency than the elementary ones. Also, there are some pieces of advice that may be only suitable to apply in a specific learning environment or cultural background. Therefore, among the VLS instructions from teachers, it must be the endless effort and the ultimate responsibility of the learners themselves to determine which pieces of learning strategy would most positively affect their English acquisition progress.

6.3 Limitations

There are a number of limitations in this study which are worth mentioning. First, with such a small number of participants, any findings attained from this study are limited within its target population. In addition, the research sample was selected because of its availability and convenience, so it is considered risky to generalize the research conclusions as characteristics of VLS of EFL learners in other ethnic groups. Another limitation is that the practice TOEIC® Reading and Listening test was the only way I used to measure the English learners’ proficiency and then classify them into the two sample groups with two different levels of achievement.
The quantitative data of this research were entirely acquired from an adapted version of Oxford’s (1990) SILL which is a self-reported questionnaire. In spite of a wide range of conveniences of this kind of survey in academic research, the respondents “may not remember the strategies they have used in the past, may claim to use strategies that in fact they do not use, or they may not understand the strategy descriptions in the questionnaire items” (Chamot, 2004, p. 15). Macaro (2006) added that the results of the SILL survey might have been unreliable or invalid because they can be transferred in inconsistent ways across social and cultural settings. Consequently, this survey should ideally be accompanied by other research instruments such as observations, diary keeping, think-aloud or interview protocols to yield more accurate data (Radwan, 2011).

In spite of implementing interview as a qualitative data collecting device in this study, there were also some disadvantages of this research instrument. The first one was the fact that the teacher, who was in the position of power, was the interviewer. As Nunan (1992) pointed out, “the inequitable relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee will affect the content of interview as well as the language which is used” (p. 150). Indeed, this problematic aspect was really noticed during some interviews when some information about compensation VLS shared by some interviewees contradicted with what I observed during class time. I did try my best to explain the core purpose of conducting this study and the benefits for the participants and attempted to reduce the informants’ arising nervousness as well. The second one was the presence of the recorder, which can “add to the anxiety of the participants” (Lee Mckay, 2006, p. 56). Starting the interview as a formal conversation, maintaining the friendly atmosphere and providing encouraging feedback throughout the discussion were what I could do to relax the respondents. Nevertheless, there was no absolute assurance for the total elimination of the inherent power
relationship in teacher – student interviews and the negative influence of using tape-recording during this type of data collecting process.

6.4 Recommendations for Further Studies

In relation to the findings of this research, some suggestions have emerged for further investigations. The first one is relevant to the scale of the present study which officially included only thirty-six questionnaire respondents and eight interviewees who were preparing for the TOEIC® test. The research results could be more generalisable if it attracted the participation of a larger population of English learners from different studying environments or with various learning motivations.

The second issue lies in the recruitment of the research instruments, one of which was the achievement test utilized to distinguish students according to their levels of proficiency. A sample TOEIC® test assessing only listening and reading competence might not be the best device to precisely measure the students’ proficiency levels. This unwise selection might in turn account for the same medium degree of VLS use in both groups. As a result, standardized tests evaluating all four language skills or GPAs in English courses at schools should be considered to ensure the accuracy and objectiveness of the participants classification in any future research. In addition, in spite of the popularity of SILL as a research instrument in existing literature, there have been matters related to the reliability of the quantitative data extracted from the self-report questionnaires. Expressly, apart from failing to obtain the exact frequency use of strategies in reality in some cases, it was possible that the target informants used some VLS that were not involved in those forty-five items. Therefore, along with semi-structured interview as in the current project, the coordinating with other data collecting instruments such as classroom observations, think-aloud protocols or diary keeping can be mixed-method approaches for gathering more valid
and sensitive data. Next, employing Analysis of Variance Test (ANOVA Test) to investigate the correlation between the participants’ results in an achievement test or a vocabulary size test and their mean scores replied to the questionnaire may shed more light on the relationship between the participants’ VLS and their academic achievement.

Lastly, there are some notions related to how the conducting of the present study should be adjusted. The findings of this research provided us with the knowledge about what the successful and less-than successful learners did to improve their vocabulary competence. However, correlation is not necessarily causation as we fail to know exactly which of the forty-five VLS actually contributed to the favoured learning outcomes of the higher achievers. Therefore, an experimental study recruiting a control group and a treatment group to examine the impacts of a particular VLS may provide a more accurate conclusion about the effectiveness of that specific learning strategy. Also, the current work can be extended to investigate the LLS in the connection with not only the proficiency level but also other individual difference variables in the domain of SLA. The last suggestion for other researchers who have great interest with LLS is that they should attempt to focus on other specific characteristics of foreign language studying such as speaking, listening, writing, reading or grammar. The findings of future studies on the correlations between the proficiency level and the LLS used in a particular language skill will absolutely benefit the foreign language learners at any levels.
References


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Appendices

Appendix A: Sample questions of the TOEIC® Listening Test

## Listening TEST

In the Listening test, you will be asked to demonstrate how well you understand spoken English. The entire Listening test will last approximately 45 minutes. There are four parts, and directions are given for each part. You must ask your answers on the separate answer sheet. Do not write your answers in the textbook.

### Part 1

**Directions:** For each question in this part, you will hear four statements about the picture in your test book. When you hear the statement, you must select the one statement that best describes what you see in the picture. Then find the number of the question on your answer sheet and mark your answer. The statements will not be printed in your test book and will be spoken only one time.

**Example**

![Image]

Statement (C). “He is writing in the notebook,” is the best description of the picture, so you should select answer (C) and mark it on your answer sheet.

**Sample Answer**

A  B  C  D
Part 2

Directions: You will hear a question or statement and three responses spoken in English. They will be spoken only one time and will not be printed in your test book. Select the best response to the question or statement and mark the letter (A), (B), or (C) on your answer sheet.

Example

You will hear: Where did you buy your tie?
You will also hear: (A) Next time we’ll do better.
(B) At the downtown shopping center.
(C) We’ll move to the new building soon.

The best response to question “Where did you buy your tie?” is choice (B), “At the downtown shopping center,” so (B) is the correct answer. You should mark answer (B) on your answer sheet.

11. Mark your answer on your answer sheet
12. Mark your answer on your answer sheet
13. Mark your answer on your answer sheet
14. Mark your answer on your answer sheet
15. Mark your answer on your answer sheet
16. Mark your answer on your answer sheet
17. Mark your answer on your answer sheet
18. Mark your answer on your answer sheet
19. Mark your answer on your answer sheet
20. Mark your answer on your answer sheet
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35. Mark your answer on your answer sheet
36. Mark your answer on your answer sheet
37. Mark your answer on your answer sheet
38. Mark your answer on your answer sheet
39. Mark your answer on your answer sheet
40. Mark your answer on your answer sheet
Part 3

Directions: You will hear some conversations between two people. You will be asked to answer three questions about what the speaker says in each conversation. Select the best response to each question and mark the letter (A), (B), (C), or (D) on your answer sheet. The conversations will be spoken only one time and will not be printed in your test book.

41. What are the speaker talking about?
   (A) Their workplace  
   (B) A basketball game  
   (C) A party they had attended  
   (D) The man’s new place

42. What did Jim recently do?
   (A) Move into a new apartment  
   (B) Watch a basketball game  
   (C) Hold a housewarming party  
   (D) Get a new job

43. What will the men probably do this Friday?
   (A) Attend a sporting event  
   (B) Hold a housewarming party  
   (C) Move into a new apartment  
   (D) Visit his brother

44. Where is the conversation taking place?
   (A) At a bank  
   (B) In a restaurant  
   (C) At a bakery  
   (D) In an office

45. What does the man ask for?
   (A) A menu  
   (B) A check  
   (C) A refund  
   (D) A drink

46. What will the women do next?
   (A) Bring the man a menu  
   (B) Pay for her meal  
   (C) Put in an order to the kitchen  
   (D) Bring the man a drink
Part 4

Directions: You will hear some short talks given by a single speaker. You will be asked to answer three questions about what the speaker says in each short talk. Select the best response to each question and mark the letter (A), (B), (C), or (D) on your answer sheet. The talks will be spoken only one time and will not be printed in your test book.

47. Who is the intended audience of this announcement?
(A) Dance instructors
(B) High school students
(C) Ballet students
(D) School janitors

48. What will the listeners do right after they’ve signed up?
(A) Pick up their outfits
(B) Get into their ballet clothes
(C) Clean the gymnasium
(D) Register for the class

49. When will the class begin?
(A) In an hour
(B) In thirty minutes
(C) In fifteen minutes
(D) In five minutes

50. On which way is the caller most likely getting this message?
(A) Monday
(B) Wednesday
(C) Friday
(D) Sunday

51. What does the speaker remind the listeners of?
(A) They are open longer hours.
(B) They will be moving to Markham city.
(C) They will be closed due to repairs.
(D) They will be having a sale next week.

52. Which product would most likely be sold at the business?
(A) Desks
(B) Floor tiles
(C) Groceries
(D) Light fixtures
Reading TEST

In the reading test, you will read a variety of texts and answer several different types of reading comprehension question. The entire reading test will last 75 minutes. There are three parts, and directions are given for each part. You are encouraged to answer as many question as possible within the time allowed.

Part 5

Directions: A word or phrase is missing in each of the sentences below. Four answers choices are given below each sentence. Select the best answer to complete the sentence. Then, mark the letter (A), (B), (C), or (D) on your answer sheet.

101. Recent graduates often find it a challenge to communicate ______ less-qualified but more experienced workers?
   (E) by  (F) per  (G) for  (H) with

102. The successful ______ of a large corporation requires a variety of skills and talents?
   (E) administer  (F) administration  (G) administering  (H) administrable

103. Our company prides itself on making many special recreational and educational programs ______ to its workers.
   (A) presentable  (B) reachable  (C) available  (D) enjoyable

104. The company chairman expressed disappointment in the behavior of some staff members ______ said that most employees had followed company guidelines.
   (E) and  (F) but  (G) or  (H) else

105. A spokesman for the board of directors announced that the chairman will step down ______ and when it becomes necessary?
   (E) if  (F) there  (G) then  (H) so

106. Following criticism by government regulators, the company will issue ______ safety guidelines in the near future.
   (E) revise  (F) revised  (G) revision  (H) revising
Questions 141-143 refer to the following notice.

**NOTICE TO EMPLOYMENT**

**ADVERTISERS AND JOB SEEKERS**

Mileading advertisements places in the employment ______ of our newspaper can

141. (A) area  
     (B)section  
     (C) branch  
     (D) department

result in hardship and time wasted by those who are looking for jobs, and this is certainly unacceptable. Placing false ads that are misleading is an offence against the Trade Practices and Fair Trade Act.

Any _______ wishing to place a want ad with us should keep in mind that all

142. (A) employees  
     (B) employs  
     (C) employment  
     (D) employer

advertisements should include a job title, a clear _______ of the job, and the income basis

143. (A) information  
     (B) subscription  
     (C) description  
     (D) requirement

and be placed under the appropriate category.

For further information, contact the Department of Fair Trade at 755-5720 during business hours.
October 20, 2006

Mr. Joe Fernandez
1385 Midland Ave.
Detroit, Michigan

Dear Mr. Fernandez,

As the president, I am proud to announce that this Friday marks the 30th anniversary of our long and successful running country club. This, of course, calls for a night of celebration. And for this reason, we have reserved the Grand Hall at the Falcon Hotel this Friday at 7p.m for a night of fine dining and dancing.

On the special evening, the newest members of our club will get an opportunity to listen to the thoughts of our members and exchange ideas in an informal atmosphere. The newest members, who will carry on our tradition, should hear what the older members have to say.

Further, the food will be superb. I’ve had a chance to dine at the hotel several times in the past in other functions, and it was the food that convinced me to hold our event there. I am quite certain that all of our members will share my feeling. Anyhow, I am looking forward to this Friday when all of our members can let loose and have some fun.

Therefore, this is a letter officially to invite you and your spouse or significant other to join us on this memorable evening.

Please let us know if you can’t attend.

Yours sincerely,

Jeff Connelly
153. What is the main purpose of this letter?
(A) To provide information about the club’s history
(B) To notify the members of a yearly meeting
(C) To welcome the newest member to the club
(D) To invite the members to an upcoming event

154. Which of the following will NOT be part of the event?
(A) Discussion
(B) Entertainment
(C) Presentations
(D) Dinner

155. According to Mr. Connelly, what led him to hold the event there?
(A) It has become a tradition at the club.
(B) He has special ties with the hotel staff.
(C) The hotel is located close to the club.
(D) He was impressed with its menu.
Questions 186-190 refer to the following advertisement and e-mail message.

Pretige Properties now Available
For discerning customers seeking unique properties. The Hills Real Estate Agency is pleased to announce the availability of the following residences in the most upscale parts of our city:

**Santa Rosa**
This beautiful Spanish-style mansion extends over a gently sloping half-acre block. Constructed during the boom period of the 1920s, it has retained many original architectural and historical features while the kitchen and bathrooms have been tastefully modernized. Stunning sandstone contrasts with green lawns and colorful flower gardens, with views of the ocean from the second floor. Call now, to arrange a viewing.

**Warehouse Conversion**
If you are seeking an open-plan style apartment located in the heart of the vibrant inner city that is quite and secure with a tranquil courtyard in its heart, this is property for you. Truly a unique opportunity, this 3-bedroom, 2 bathroom, architect-designed conversion can offer tranquility and space for your artistic endeavors or can open up to be the perfect party house. Inspect now.

**Victorian Terrace**
They don’t come much more sophisticated than this 3-story Victorian terrace built in 1885. Located on a wide semi-circular street opposite elegant Victoria Park, the front garden and wide upper-level balcony are bathed in generous sunshine during the winter months while being protected from the wind. A rare opportunity for those who love combining comfortable living with elegant entertaining. A large living room adjoins a magnificent dining area served by a modern kitchen with plenty of bench-space. Three upstairs bedrooms, two with en-suite bathrooms, plus a guest bathroom on the ground floor, complete the picture.

For further information and to arrange inspections (appointment only) please call our office at 965-2254 or 965-2255 or email at johnconnor@thehills.com
To: johnconnor@thehills.com
From: lisabrown@kyu.com
Subject: Interested buyer

Dear Mr. Connor,
I was very interested in your recent advertisement. I am seeking a residence that can accommodate an art studio and possibly hold private exhibitions for the work I do. One of the listed places sound similar could be suitable for my needs. Therefore, I would like to meet with you soon to take a look at the place. Could you please let me know when a good time for you is? I am okay anytime this week except for Wednesday evening. Please get back to be as soon as possible.

Thanks so much for your attention.
Lisa Brown: 755-1207

186. For whom is this advertisement most likely intended?
(A) Newlyweds who are looking for a cozy place
(B) People who have financially established themselves
(C) Anyone who is looking for a bargain
(D) Families with many children

187. Who is John Connor?
(A) An architect
(B) A real estate agent
(C) An artist
(D) A history professor

188. According to the email. Which of the following places will most likely suit Ms. Brown the most?
(A) Santa Rosa
(B) Warehouse Conversion
(C) Victorian Terrace
(D) None of them

189. What is the main purpose of the email?
(A) To receive information about an art exhibit
(B) To set up an appointment
(C) To put her apartment on the market
(D) To reply to an inquiry she received from the man

190. What can be implied about Ms. Brown?
(A) She is an artist.
(B) She buys and sells properties.
(C) She is interested in taking out an ad.
(D) She coordinates seminars and conferences for a living.
Strategy Inventory for Language Learning

Version 7.0 (ESL/EFL)

© R. Oxford. 1990

DIRECTIONS

This form of the STRATEGY INVENTORY FOR LANGUAGE LEARNING (SILL) is for students of English as a second or foreign language. On the separate worksheet, write the response (1, 2, 3, 4 or 5) that tells HOW TRUE OF YOU THE STATEMENT IS.

1. Never or almost never true of me
2. Usually not true of me
3. Somewhat true of me
4. Usually true of me
5. Always or almost always true of me

NEVER OR ALMOST NEVER TRUE OF ME means that the statement is very rarely true of you.

USUALLY NOT TRUE OF ME means that the statement is true less than half the time.

SOMewhat TRUE OF ME means that the statement is true of you about half the time.

USUALLY TRUE OF ME means that the statement is true more than half the time.

ALWAYS OR ALMOST ALWAYS TRUE OF ME means that the statement is true of you almost always.

Answer in terms of how well the statement describes YOU. Do not answer how you think you should be, or what other people do. There are no right or wrong answers to these statements. Put your answers on the separate Worksheet. Please make no marks on the items. Work as quickly as
you can without being careless. This usually takes about 20-30 minutes to complete. If you have any questions, let the teacher know immediately.

EXAMPLE

I actively seek out opportunities to talk with native speakers in English.

On this page, put an "X" in the blank underneath the statement that best describes what you actually do in regard to English now. Do not make any marks on the Worksheet yet.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Never or Almost Never</th>
<th>Generally Not True of Me</th>
<th>Somewhat True of Me</th>
<th>Generally True of Me</th>
<th>Always or Almost Always True of Me</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If you have answered the question above, you have just completed the example item.

Now wait for the teacher to give you the signal to go on to the other items. When you answer the questions, work carefully but quickly. Mark the rest of your answers on the Worksheet, starting with item 1.
Part A

1. I think of relationships between what I already know and new things I learn in English.
2. I use new English words in a sentence so I can remember them.
3. I connect the sound of a new English word and an image or picture of the word to help remember the word.
4. I remember a new English word by making a mental picture of a situation in which the word might be used.
5. I use rhymes to remember new English words.
6. I use flashcards to remember new English words.
7. I physically act out new English words.
8. I review English lessons often.
9. I remember new English words or phrases by remembering their location on the page, on the board, or on a street sign.

Part B

10. I say or write new English words several times.
11. I try to talk like native English speakers.

12. I practice the sounds of English.

13. I use the English words I know in different ways.


15. I watch English language TV shows spoken in English or go to movies spoken in English.

16. I read for pleasure in English.

17. I write notes, messages, letters, or reports in English.

18. I first skim an English passage (read over the passage quickly) then go back and read carefully.

19. I look for words in my own language that are similar to new words in English.

20. I try to find patterns in English.

21. I find the meaning of an English word by dividing it into parts that I understand.

22. I try not to translate word-for-word.

23. I make summaries of information that I hear or read in English.

Part C

24. To understand unfamiliar English words, I make guesses.

25. When I can't think of a word during a conversation in English, I use gestures.

26. I make up new words if I do not know the right ones in English.

27. I read English without looking up every new word.

28. I try to guess what the other person will say next in English.

29. If I can't think of an English word, I use a word or phrase that means the same thing.

Part D

30. I try to find as many ways as I can to use my English.

31. I notice my English mistakes and use that information to help me do better.
32. I pay attention when someone is speaking English.

33. I try to find out how to be a better learner of English.

34. I plan my schedule so I will have enough time to study English.

35. I look for people I can talk to in English.

36. I look for opportunities to read as much as possible in English.

37. I have clear goals for improving my English skills.

38. I think about my progress in learning English.

**Part E**

39. I try to relax whenever I feel afraid of using English.

40. I encourage myself to speak English even when I am afraid of making a mistake.

41. I give myself a reward or treat when I do well in English.

42. I notice if I am tense or nervous when I am studying or using English.

43. I write down my feelings in a language learning diary.

44. I talk to someone else about how I feel when I am learning English.

**Part F**

45. If I do not understand something in English, I ask the other person to slow down or say it again.

46. I ask English speakers to correct me when I talk.

47. I practice English with other students.

48. I ask for help from English speakers.

49. I ask questions in English.

50. I try to learn about the culture of English speakers.
Appendix D: Adapted version of Oxford’s (1990) SILL v7.0

Questionnaire for Vocabulary Learning Strategies

This form of the strategy inventory is for students of English as a second or foreign language. You will find statements about learning English vocabulary. Please read each statement. MARK the response (1, 2, 3, 4, or 5) in the survey to answer HOW TRUE OF YOU THE STATEMENT IS.

1. NEVER OR ALMOST NEVER TRUE OF ME.
2. USUALLY NOT TRUE OF ME.
3. SOMEWHAT TRUE OF ME.
4. USUALLY TRUE OF ME.
5. ALWAYS OR ALMOST ALWAYS TRUE OF ME.

Answer in terms of how well the statement describes YOU. Do not answer how you think you should be, or what other people do. There are no right or wrong answers to these statements. Work as quickly as you can without being careless. This usually takes about 20-30 minutes to complete. If you have any questions, let me know immediately.

Part A

1. I think of relationships between what I already know and new things I learn in English.

2. I use new English words in a sentence so I can remember them.

3. I connect the sound of a new English word and an image or picture of the word to help me remember the word.
4. I remember a new English word by making a mental picture of a situation in which the word might be used.
5. I use rhymes to remember new English words.
6. I use flashcards to remember new English words.
7. I physically act out new English words.
8. I review English lessons often.
9. I remember new English words or phrases by remembering their location on the page, on the board, or on a street sign.

Part B
10. I say or write new English words several times.
11. I try to talk like native English speakers.
12. I practice the sounds of English.
13. I use the English words I know in different ways.
15. I watch English language TV shows or go to movies spoken in English.
16. I read for pleasure in English.
17. I write notes, messages, letters, or reports in English.
18. I look for words in my own language that are similar to new words in English.
19. I try to find patterns in English.
20. I find the meaning of an English word by dividing it into parts that I understand.
21. I try not to translate word-for-word.
Part C

22. To understand unfamiliar English words, I make guesses. ① ② ③ ④ ⑤

23. When I can’t think of a word during a conversation in English, I use gestures. ① ② ③ ④ ⑤

24. I make up new words if I do not know the right ones in English. ① ② ③ ④ ⑤

25. I read English without looking up every new word. ① ② ③ ④ ⑤

26. If I can’t think of an English word, I use a word or phrase that means the same thing. ① ② ③ ④ ⑤

Part D

27. I try to find as many ways as I can to use my English. ① ② ③ ④ ⑤

28. I notice my English mistakes and use that information to help me do better. ① ② ③ ④ ⑤

29. I pay attention when someone is speaking English. ① ② ③ ④ ⑤

30. I try to find out how to be a better learner of English. ① ② ③ ④ ⑤

31. I plan my schedule so I will have enough time to study English. ① ② ③ ④ ⑤

32. I look for people I can talk to in English. ① ② ③ ④ ⑤

33. I look for opportunities to read as much as possible in English. ① ② ③ ④ ⑤

34. I have clear goals for improving my English skills. ① ② ③ ④ ⑤

35. I think about my progress in learning English. ① ② ③ ④ ⑤

Part E

36. I try to relax whenever I feel afraid of using English. ① ② ③ ④ ⑤

37. I encourage myself to speak English even when I am afraid of making a mistake. ① ② ③ ④ ⑤
38. I give myself a reward or treat when I do well in English.  
39. I notice if I am tense or nervous when I am studying or using English.  
40. I talk to someone else about how I feel when I am learning English.  

**Part F**

41. If I do not understand something in English, I ask the other person to slow down or to say it again.  
42. I ask English speakers to correct me when I talk.  
43. I practice English with other students.  
44. I ask for help from English speakers.  
45. I ask questions in English.
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Why are you studying English? For your job or your studying? Any other purposes?
2. Do you have many chances to use English in your daily life? If yes, on which occasions?
3. Do you think vocabulary is crucial to learning English? If yes, how important it is?
4. How do you define “knowing an English word”?
5. What strategies do you usually use to memorise a new word?
6. What activities do you often do to enlarge your English vocabulary? Do you often seek for chances to learn new words out of class?
7. When you encounter a new word in an English reading text, how do you deal with it? How about in the case you don’t know exactly a word while speaking or writing in English?
8. Do you think you are studying English vocabulary effectively? Why do you think so? How often do you usually review the vocabulary that you have already leant? In what ways?
9. What difficulties do you experience when learning English vocabulary? How do you deal with them? Have you ever felt frustrated with learning vocabulary? If yes, what did you do at that time?
10. Studying English vocabulary on your own or with others, which one do you prefer? Why?
11. Do you think it is essential for teachers to teach students English vocabulary learning strategies? Why or why not?
BẢNG CÂU HỎI PHÔNG VÂN

1. Tại sao bạn học tiếng Anh? Việc công việc hay cho việc học tập? Còn mục đích nào khác nữa không?

2. Hằng ngày, bạn có nhiều cơ hội sử dụng tiếng Anh không? Nếu có thì là vào những dịp nào?

3. Bạn có nghĩ từ vựng quan trọng trong việc học tiếng Anh không? Nếu có thì nó quan trọng như thế nào?

4. Bạn định nghĩa thế nào là “biết một từ tiếng Anh”?

5. Bạn thường dùng những cách nào để nhớ một từ mới?

6. Bạn thường thực hiện các hoạt động nào để mở rộng vốn từ tiếng Anh của mình? Ngoài giờ học trên lớp, bạn có hay tìm cơ hội để biết thêm từ mới không?

7. Khi gặp phải một từ mới trong bài đọc tiếng Anh, bạn thường làm gì? Còn trong trường hợp đang nói hoặc viết tiếng Anh mà bạn không biết chính xác từ để dùng thì sao?


10. Bạn thích học từ vựng tiếng Anh một mình hay với người khác hơn? Vì sao vậy?

11. Bạn có nghĩ là giáo viên nên hướng dẫn học viên các cách để học từ vựng tiếng Anh không? Tại sao?
THESIS APPROVAL FORM

Student: NGUYEN THI PHUOC LOC

Department: Languages and Literature, College of Liberal Arts

Thesis Title: VOCABULARY LEARNING STRATEGIES OF HIGH AND LOW PROFICIENCY VIETNAMESE TOEIC ® LEARNERS

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